

THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE



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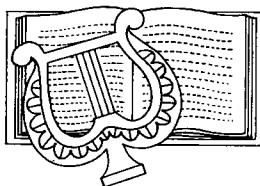
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THE
BUSINESS OF PLEASURE

BY
EDMUND YATES
AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP"

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET
1879

EDMUND YATES'S NOVELS.

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A RIGHTED WRONG.
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DR. WAINWRIGHT'S PATIENT.
WRECKED IN PORT.

TO

WILLIAM HENRY WILLS,

AT WHOSE SUGGESTION

MOST OF THE ESSAYS HEREIN CONTAINED

WERE WRITTEN,

This Volume is Enscribed

WITH THE AUTHOR'S SINCEREST REGARD.

Kensington, May 1865.

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THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

IF, as Froissart says, we English take our pleasure sadly after our fashion, it is very certain that we take it coolly. We *will* have it, be it in what shape it may, though dress-makers die in working against time for the preparation of our court robes, and bakers' lives are sacrificed to our partiality for hot rolls. But when we have got it, we think very little of it, and very much less of those who, some by great natural gifts, combined with much labour, industry, and perseverance, minister to the pleasure of which we make so light. Great actors and singers are, by a certain portion of society, classed with cooks, mountebanks, and horse-jockeys. "That man who wrote the book, you know," is the phrase by which Mr. Tennyson or Dr. Darwin would be designated; and world-renowned artists are "odd persons whom one does not meet about." With that wretched imposition which occasionally in England is known as society—that gathering of vapidity to each component part of which the laws which guide it prescribe a blank ignorance—an uncaring, unquestioning acceptance of matters as they stand; a horror

of talent as low, and of unconventionality as not correct—with this dreary phantasm sometimes regnant among us, Business, however lumpy, coarse, unrefined, can be received, provided it be properly gilt; but Pleasure and her professors, however clever, bright, and decent, are under the ban. Yet the Business of Pleasure is carried on in the most methodical manner, is of enormous extent, employs countless “hands,” and avails itself of all the counting-house, clerk, day-book, and ledger system, without which respectability cannot understand existence. To carry out the Business of English Pleasure, men and women are at this very time practising eight hours a day in dreary little Italian cities under renowned maestri, labouring against innumerable difficulties, privations, and disappointments, and solely cheered by the hope that on some future day they shall be permitted to minister to pleasure in London, and earn the meed reserved for a few such ministrants. In the Business of Pleasure, acres and acres of English ground, and Rhenish mountain, and French and Spanish plain, are set apart and cultivated to the highest degree of perfection; in the same interest hardy Norsemen are salmon-fishing; heavy Westphalian boors, preposterously accoutred, are boar-hunting; blue-bloused Alsatian peasants are fattening bilious geese; dirty Russians are oiling cod-sounds. Those engaged in the Business of Pleasure are of various stations, of various temperaments, of various degrees of usefulness; but from all is there required as strict honesty, punctuality, and fidelity, as proper and earnest a performance of their duties, as thorough rectitude, as in any other condition in life.

It is my purpose in these Essays to show the inner life of some of those carrying on the Business of Pleasure, and bringing thereto as much energy, honesty, and industry, as great aptitude for business, as much self-abnegation, as much skill and talent for seizing opportunities and supplying promptly the public demand, and in very many cases as

much capital, as are required in any other business. It may arise from the fact that I spring from parents who by profession were, according to a generous Act of Parliament only recently repealed, set forth among their fellow-men as “rogues and vagabonds ;” but one of whom certainly used up his life, and killed himself at an early age, from his unceasing labour in a popular, an honest, an intellectual, but a parliamentarily-despised calling. It may be that in my own career I have seen that those who made it their business to amuse men in their leisure, had very often a much more difficult, and always a more thankless, task than those who coped with men in their active work. It may have been from other causes not necessary to dwell upon ; but I have long felt that the “butterfly” notion common among ordinary business people, as applied to those who belonged to none of the recognised professions, or whose trade could not be found entered in the exhaustive list in the *Post-Office Directory*, was a mistake. So that, my family connection with theatrical life, and my own position as a journalist and writer, favouring the scheme, I determined upon giving specimens of the inner life of some of those establishments where pleasure is carried on as a regular business and in regular business fashion ; showing, so far as is practicable and just, the method, manner, and expense of its conduct. To these I have added a few papers descriptive of the actual business details ; the cost and conduct of certain of the sports and pastimes of Englishmen, such as hunting, shooting, etc. ; the organisation of an excursion-agent ; the inner life of a newspaper-office ; some articles descriptive of the behind-the-scenes of the Volunteer movement ; and some other papers illustrative of London society.

CHAPTER II.

CREMORNE GARDENS.

REMOVING recently into a new house—a miserable performance which has once or twice fallen to my lot—I determined, besides giving a “general superintendence” (which means looking helplessly on, while stout men in carpet-caps balance chests-of-drawers, console-tables, and looking-glasses, and saying to them, perspiring, and in proximate danger of letting every thing drop: “Steady there ; mind the corner ! a-a-h ! the gilt frame !”), I determined on looking after my books, of which I possess a tolerable number, and arranging them myself. Experience fully carrying out all she had promised in the round-hand copy-slip at school, taught me this plan ; for when we made our former celebrated removal from Glum Street, Holstein Square, to Jetsam Gardens, Matilda, my maid, kindly undertook to “put my books straight,” an effort which resulted in an utter impossibility of finding any work of reference, and in the final discovery of the third volume of Rabelais lurking shamefacedly behind Nelson’s *Fasts and Festivals*. So I sat down on an enormous pile of volumes in the middle of the library-floor, and I looked at the row of empty bookcases, glaring in a very ghastly manner from the walls, and I began my task ; very seldom, however, settling more than a dozen books without again sitting down to peer between the leaves

of some volume which I had not seen for a very long time. They were of all sorts: some of my father's old Charterhouse schoolbooks; editions of the Classics, free from all that erudite annotation which has been so productive of headache to schoolboys of more recent date; some of my own schoolbooks with names once familiar, now long forgotten, scrawled on the margin of the pages, and a fancy portrait of Euripides (very fancy) on the fly-leaf of the *Orestes*; Jones's early poems, *Twilight Musings*, with my name inscribed on the title-page in Jones's own hand, "from his devoted friend and cue-fellow." Jones is now principal vitriol-thrower on the *Scalpel* literary newspaper, and is popularly believed to have written that review of his devoted friend and cue-fellow's last book of travels which caused the devoted f. and c.f. to spend an evening rolling on his hearthrug in agonies of rage and despair. Here are other given books: *Manna in the Wilderness, or the Smitten Rock*, presented to me at "Crismass 1844," as the written legend records, by my cousin Augustus, who was great at morality, but weak in orthography, and who in the next spring ran away and joined Herr Carlos Wilkinson's travelling cirque, after having forged his father's name to a cheque for twenty pounds. Here is my first copy of Shakespeare, with my name in faded ink, and underneath it two sets of initials in different handwritings, the owners of which, long separated by death, are, I pray Heaven, more happily reunited; and here is a copy of Blugg's collected works, with the sixpenny label of the bookstall still sticking to it. Poor Dick Blugg, who combined so much capacity for writing and gin-and-water, and whose life was divided between a bare room containing a desk, a blotting-pad, an ink-bottle, and a pile of paper, where he did his work, and the night-houses in the Haymarket, where he spent his money. Other books acting as milestones in one's life: copy of Mr. Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, with the "young gazelle" bit very much

pencil-scored ; Byron's *Giaour*, *Childe Harold*, and works generally, with marginal pencilled references expressive of my entire concurrence in the noble poet's views of human nature (by the date it must have been just after J. M. married that stockbroker) ; and a copy of the *Vauxhall Comic Songster*, with the portrait and autograph of a once-celebrated comic singer. Milestones indeed ! Where is the comic singer ? Dust and ashes ! The Yorick of the orchestra, with his white waistcoat and his thumbs in his armholes, his queer merry eyes and thin pursed lips, with his riddles and his jokes and his tol-de-rol choruses—dust and ashes ! And Vauxhall ? with its thousand of extra lamps, and its gritty arcades, and its ghastly Italian walk, and its rickety firework gallery, and its mildewy Eve at the fountain, and Joel Il Diavolo's terrific descent with the crackers in his heels, and the skinny fowls and the dry ham and the rack-punch, and the enclosure outside Mr. Wardell's house where all the hansom cabs were inextricably mixed together—where are these ? On what the bills used to call the "royal property" (at this moment I can plainly see the sticking-plaster portrait of Simpson, life-size, by the pay-place) are reared now suburban villas, wherein the young soap-boiler tosses his son and heir, or the bone-crusher's head-clerk reads the American news with calm contempt. No ! the name may remain, but the place has vanished for ever.

"Vanished for ever" is a dreary phrase ; but then I recollect that there is yet a place of amusement for summer-nights, and that those lively persons who "to Ranelagh went and Vauxhall" may, if they have a mind (and legs) to do so, go to what I should imagine must be a much pleasanter place than either of them—to Cremorne ; and when this idea came into my head, I remembered that during the previous week I had been at CREMORNE, and I put down my *Comic Songster*, and lay back on the pile of books, thinking on all I had heard there.

Heard at Cremorne ! What do people hear at Cremorne? The band and the peripatetic brass instruments (which indeed are rather too much heard), and the rumble of the bowls in the American Saloon, and the crack of the rifles discharged by the sportsmen at the little tin beasts which slowly revolve, and the whizzing rush of the rockets, and the roar of the final firework explosion (which must be so comforting to any neighbour suffering with sick-headache, and just in his first sleep); and sometimes, I am given to understand, there may be heard by young couples at Cremorne the voice of love ! I heard all these except the last (but then I am not young, and on this occasion I was not a couple); but I heard something else. For as I wandered about the grounds and looked in at the open coffee-room windows, and lounged into the theatre, staring for a few minutes at the ballet, as I noticed the thoroughly trim and neat appearance of the gardens, as I marked the extensive preparations for the fireworks, and as I endeavoured to dodge the rather meandering steps of a gentleman in armour whom I encountered in a back-walk, whose vizor rendered him doubtful as to his eyesight, and whose shining greaves rendered him unsteady on his legs—I began to ponder on the magnitude of the undertaking, and to wonder how the various wheels in the great whole worked with such unceasing regularity. Here must be large capital involved, very many people engaged, constant supervision exercised, and all for the production of Pleasure. Your “man of business” (who, by the way, when he is that, and nothing more, is horribly offensive) would sneer at the application of the word to the conduct of such a place as this; and yet I have no doubt that there is as much labour, capital, and energy employed here as in many establishments whose names are household words in the circle of a mile from the Exchange. Pleasure has its business, which requires to be carried on with as great tact,

earnestness, energy, forethought, and exactness as any other; and when patience, prudence, and perseverance are brought to bear in carrying on the business of pleasure, the result is Fortune. When the business of pleasure is carried on as pleasure itself, no one is pleased, and the result to the speculator is Bankruptcy.

The more I thought of the subject the more I wondered ; so that presently encountering the master-mind and governing spirit of the establishment, I requested to have some details of its cost and management: he pleasantly consented, and “while the men and maids were dancing, and the folk were mad with glee,” I sat calmly discussing statistics, and gleaned the following information anent the wherewithal necessary for carrying out the business of pleasure at Cremorne.

So quietly, orderly, and well is this place conducted, and with such sensible regard to the interest of its frequenters (who, by the way, are of all classes, ranging from old women and children who come for an early tea and a stroll in the grounds, who are possessed with wild desires to see the dogs and monkeys, and listen to the band, down to gentlemanly gentlemen who eat suppers, and are far too grand to express their desire to see anything at all), that, by its non-frequenters and by a huge class of amiable people who look upon any amusement as emanating from Moloch and beckoning towards the gallows, it would never be heard of, were it not for the practical wit of certain exquisite humorists, who annually mark certain festive days in London’s calendar by breaking the proprietor’s glasses and the waiters’ heads. This amiable class may perchance be strong in its notions of the diffusion of capital and the employment of labour ; it may be always publishing pamphlets in which these subjects are paraded, in which it is clearly proved that this wretched country is on its way to destruction, and that the sooner every person with natural strength or mechanical knowledge

is on his way to some hitherto unheard-of land—there to set up that log-hut, and to ply that axe which have stood the poetasters in such good stead—the better for himself and for society.

The gardens of Cremorne are twenty-two acres in extent, are prettily laid out, are filled with brilliant flowers, and are kept with as much care as those of the Horticultural Society. Indeed, of the quiet daylight frequenters of the place, were they not properly attended to, there would be a serious falling off. During the season the services of fifteen gardeners are constantly required, in rolling paths, mowing lawns, and attending to the beds. Previous to opening, twenty carpenters, six scene-painters, twelve gasmen, two women to sew canvas, four men to repair the roof, and five house painters, take possession of the outside of Cremorne and its appurtenances ; while two upholsterers, fifteen wardrobe-makers, and ten property-men look up old material, and prepare for internal decoration. Then the literary gentleman attached to the establishment sits down in his cabinet to compose the announcement of approaching festivities, and eight bill-posters convey the result of his cogitations to an admiring public.

In the season of 1863 the Gardens opened early in the spring with a dog-show ; and the estimate for the preparation—for gardeners, painters, roofers, carpenters, smiths, labourers, and gravel-diggers—amounted to £3500, independent of the cost of material, galvanised iron, timber, ironmongery, wire-work, etc., about £2000 more. While the exhibition was open, the expenses of keepers, police, attendants, and music, were about £300 a week, and a very large sum was expended in advertisements and prizes. This dog-show, however, was an extraneous affair, not calculated in the regular round of expense. In the same category was the tournament, to produce which the services of three hundred “supers,” six armourers, thirty-two horses, and ten grooms

were specially engaged. When the Gardens are open for the season, the regular staff is very large and very costly. It comprises sixteen money-takers, seven gasmen, two scene-painters, three house-painters, one resident master-carpenter, and seventeen wardrobe men and women. The stage department requires the services of twenty-five carpenters to work the scenes, a prompter, a hundred members of the *corps de ballet*, two principal dancers, three principal pantomimists, several vocalists, and a turncock, without whose aid the fairy fountains would not flow. Add to this a firework manufacturer with seven assistants, fifteen riders, and several horses in the circus ; a set of twenty dogs and monkeys, with their master, in the Octagon Theatre ; a set of marionettes and their master, in another part of the grounds ; twenty-five members of the regular orchestra and two peripatetic bands ; a gentleman who delivers a lecture on the Australian explorers ; three regular policemen, and on extra nights six others ; and you have some notion of what the management of Cremorne Gardens has to meet on Saturday mornings, as the cost of the amusement it provides.

The hotel department, belonging to the same proprietary, is, of course, worked by a totally different staff. The indoor division has the services of a manager and house-keeper, fifteen barmaids, two head-waiters, eighteen other waiters, a booking-clerk, two hall-keepers, and three porters. The outer division is managed by a head-waiter with fifty subordinates. In the kitchen there are four professed cooks with assistants, a kitchen-boy, a vegetable cook, two scullery-men, two bakers and confectioners, who are all overlooked by a larder clerk. There is also a man whose sole business is the production of soda-water and ginger-beer ; and there is a cowkeeper.

A few years ago supper was the great meal at Cremorne ; but under the present management dinners have been made a feature of attraction in the programme ; and the number

of dinners is now large. You can dine at various prices, and have almost anything you like to order, for the commissariat is on the most extensive scale. Regarding the consumption of food at this single establishment at the height of the season, the following list may be taken as a daily average: six salmon, twenty pairs of soles, twelve gallons of whitebait, one turbot, twenty-five pounds of eels, twenty dozen of lobsters, twenty gallons of shrimps, one saddle of mutton, one haunch, six quarters of lamb and six legs, six joints of roast-beef, two fillets of veal, fifty pounds of pressed beef, six dozen pigeon-pies, twenty-four dozen fowls, twelve dozen ducks, twelve tongues, six hams, forty pounds of bacon, two tubs of butter, two sacks of flour, and two hundred eggs. Of vegetable produce, the daily consumption is fifty quarts of peas, three dozen cauliflowers, one hundred-weight of potatoes, twenty score lettuce, one hundred heads of beetroot, thirty bunches of turnips and carrots, and six hundred bundles of watercress. Six hundred-weight of ice, two hundredweight of sugar, and twenty pounds of tea, are also consumed daily.

Such is the internal economy of Cremorne, confessedly the prettiest and best-managed public night-garden in Europe. That it is not so lively as the Chaumière, Mabille, Asnières, or the Closerie des Lilas, must be ascribed to the different character of its frequenters. We have no Counts Chicard, Brididis, Mogadors, or Frisettes (I am *laudator temporis acti* here ! it is years since I was in a French public night-garden) among us. I do not think that loss is to be regretted. I know that in "mossos" visiting us is to be found the most enthusiastic admirer of Cremorne.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREENWICH DINNER.

WHEN you invite a friend to “dinner,” before specifying the when and where, you leave him in a pleasant state of uncertainty as to your intentions and his chances of pleasure. You may mean the domestic dinner, than which, when well done, nothing can be better. By well done I mean not more than half-a-dozen people, all of them knowing and understanding each other; soup, fish, joint, a couple of entrées, a bird, a pudding, and some macaroni; a neat-handed Phyllis instead of a stupid waiter; sound wine, and a small cigar before going up to the ladies; where you have some really good music, and get away by eleven. This is doing it well: it can be badly done in many different ways. In the “pot-luck” style: a bit of hard loin-of-mutton swimming in coagulated grease, dank dabs of greens, mild beeswax of cheese, warm flat Romford ale, two glasses of fiery sherry, and a tumbler of diluted turpentine called whisky-and-water. In the grand style: where the host and hostess pass two wretched hours in telegraphing to stupid servants; where the funny friend will tell the *mal-à-propos* anecdote which cuts the most-to-be-made-up-to member of the party to the quick; where the guests all hate you for being pretentious and endeavouring to excel them; where conversation is on the revolving-light principle—occasionally

bright, frequently hazy, generally dull ; and where it is difficult to know which are most delighted when the entertainment is at an end—the people who were so pleased to see their friends, or those who have passed such a charming evening. There is the club-dinner : where you have a grand opportunity of airing your importance, and bringing your social status to bear heavily on your unoffending guest. And there is the tavern-dinner, to which you tell him you take him that “we may have a pleasant, free, jolly evening, old fellow, and be out of the way of all club formalities.” And then there is the Greenwich dinner, which is of itself a thing apart, and at the mention of which the invited one beams with delight.

For anyone who knows anything about a Greenwich dinner knows he cannot be asked to a bad one. The whitebait get large in July ; the salmon-cutlets *can* have been sent up and sent down, and sent up again, too often ; the duck may be tough ; the waiting—notably when there are three City companies, the staff of a daily newspaper, and a hundred people in the coffee-room, all clamouring and dining at once—somewhat tiresome ; but, on the whole, you cannot dine badly at Greenwich.

The mere fact of dining out of town is agreeable. It is a hot staring June day ; the heat reflected from the pavement permeates everywhere ; the air is still and sirocco-like ; one side of the way—that on which the sun is shining—is deserted ; while on the other, those men who are strong-minded enough are mopping their bald foreheads and carrying their hats boldly in their hands. Vagabond dogs with lolling tongues, unpleasantly suggestive of hydrophobia, loiter at the corners of the streets, and regard the legs of the passers-by with furtive and maniacal glances ; boys forget the charms of toffee, buns, and pegtops, and devote their pocket-money to the purchase of clinging dabs of nastiness known as penny ices ; butchers’ shops, always

unpleasant to the eye, become offensive to the nose ; while from the gratings of the eating-houses issue a warm puthery steam, which turns me sick as I pass. No dinner in London to-day ! No hot joint, tongue-flaying cheese, lukewarm beer, fiery sherry. Across my brain come visions of myriads of fish-dishes, cool cup, ice-water, luxury—Greenwich ! Thither we fly, I and thou, shadowy Cleophas, to my more shadowy Asmodeus. What matter whether steam-rattled over ragged-school-containing brick arches from London Bridge ; floated down on board *Waterman* No. 3, “deal-built, dirty-bottomed, and carrying an inexperienced medical student” bound on the same errand as ourselves ; or whirled down in the most reckless and dust-provoking of hansoms ! Here we are at The Vessel ; and now to look around us. Outside the door stand some thirty carriages of every description, horseless and closely packed together : sly little broughams, radiant in varnish, with pink window-blinds, and a tiny basket strapped opposite the seat to hold the bouquet and gloves of the fair owner ; heavy drags, looking so like superior stage-coaches without the plate and the letters, and with much-besilvered splinter-bars attached to the rails of the hind-seat ; stockbrokers’ high-wheeled mail-phætons, all brass and lacquer and fresh garish paint ; roomy family clarences, dowagers’ yellow-bodied chariots, dissipated-looking dog-carts, with the oilcloth on the suspended trap much torn and trampled by unsteady, not to say drunken, feet ; rakish hansoms, and even one or two four-wheeled cabs.

A constant stream has been pouring in ever since we have been here, and when we enter the coffee-room we find it nearly filled. Observe that the best tables (those nearest the window, with the good look-out on the river) are nearly all occupied by solitary diners—elderly big men with bald heads, huge stomachs, stolid expression, and succulent protruding under-lips. These be your City merchants, your

magnates of Lloyds' and the Exchange, your lunchers at Garraway's and the Jerusalem, your Gordon-Square dwellers, bank directors, vestry wranglers, charitable-parochial-rate supporters ; these be your fathers of Mudie-subscribing daughters, and of club smoking-room-haunting sons ; these be your autumnal-touring Britons, who give the notion of the *Milver Anglais* to the Parisian *vaudevilliste* and the Italian libretto-writer ; these be your "regular John Bulls," who live but for their business and their stomach. Go to, ye who say that there is no pleasure in the mere consumption and mastication of food ! Watch these old men : note the bobbing of their pendulous red cheeks, like the gills of a turkey-cock ; see the lighting-up of that dull fishy eye as the waiter advances bearing the duck and peas which follow so pleasantly after the course of fish ; mark the cagerness with which that pulpy, shaky, mottled old hand clutches the champagne-glass destined to cool the throat now fired with the devilled bait ; listen to the chuckling sound with which these old jaws wag o'er the melting marrowfats—and then say what is the *summum bonum* of human happiness. To this man you might read the sweetest poem of Tennyson, the most touching pathos of Dickens, and he would not experience an emotion ; but let his potatoes be soddened or his gravy burnt, and you shall behold a rage worthy of Marino Faliero, and a grief compared to which that of Rachel weeping for her children was a delusion and a sham !

And now let us glance at the internal economy of this house—The Vessel.

From the 1st of April to the 30th of September, Pleasure's business is in full swing here, and never allows the smallest relaxation. With a view to such business, and nothing else, The Vessel was built. On the heading of its bills it calls itself an hotel ; but you might search in vain on The Vessel's basement for the commercial-room ; you might pass the remainder of your life hunting without

success for the large family bedrooms, or the stuffy cupboards in which bachelors are made to pass the night. There are no baths and no billiard-room, no quaint assembly-room leading up three steps at the end of the first-floor passage, and smelling as if the ghosts of our gavotte-dancing grandmothers still inhabited it. You will never find rows of boots with number-chalked soles standing outside its chamber-doors, nor regiments of bed candlesticks on the hall-table; no “boots” lurks up its stairs at the chilly hours of the morning to call anyone who is going by the first train, nor has such a thing as a “breakfast order” ever been heard within its capacious walls. From its cellar to its attic The Vessel means dinner, and nothing but dinner. On its ground-floor are its hall, a lavatory, and the coffee-room with its numbered tables and its cheery look-out on the river. On the first-floor are the large rooms used for City companies, testimonial-dinners, and such-like, at which between two and three hundred guests often sit down simultaneously; above are the smaller rooms used for private parties. Each of these rooms is distinguished by a name—the Nelson, the Beaufort, the Wellington, etc.—and the party in each is accredited with the dinner, wine, etc. ordered and consumed, in the following fashion. In the bar sits the booking-clerk at a desk; behind him is a speaking-pipe; at his side are two flexible tubes, one descending to the cellar, the other to the kitchen. Down the speaking-pipe comes a roar: “Wellington—ice-pudding, bottle of decent hock.” Book-keeper gives ice-pudding order, but is slightly confounded about wine, so calls up: “Wellington! sparkling hock, did you say?” Answer: “Decent hock, gentleman said.” “All right.” Then down cellarman’s tube: “Wellington—bottle hock No. 3.” The principal cellarman has two assistants, who are despatched for wine while he books each order against the particular room named. The system of check is thus treble, and at

the end of the evening, when accounts are made up, three entries of every order are brought forward—that is to say, the waiter who gives it, the booking-clerk through whom it passes, and the cellarman who executes it. The cellars are perfect marvels of order and systematic detail; and so thorough is the supervision, and so accurate the check, that the superintendent, looking at the last stock-taking, can reckon the consumption to the moment of inquiry, and can at any time give you to a bottle the exact state of any bin in the vast cellarage. While on this subject, it is worth noticing that though the cellar contains numerous specimens of rare wines and curious vintages, it is very seldom indeed that they are called for. Punch, sherry, and champagne with the dinner—and nearly always champagne—it seems to be a fixed idea with Greenwich diners, more especially with those who but seldom indulge in such a luxury, that champagne is a positive necessity. After dinner, by men of the present generation, and at parties where ladies are present, claret is generally drunk; but at the great feasts of the City companies, at the testimonial-presentation dinners, at the annual gatherings of old gentlemen belonging to eccentrically-named clubs—*institutions with a superstructure of indulgence springing from a substratum of charity*—nothing but East India brown sherry and sound port ever “sparkle on the board” after the cloth has been removed from it.

On the first-floor is a kitchen, which supplies that and the floor above, while the house is pierced with “lifts” for the speedy conveyance of hot dishes and removal of plates, glasses, etc. One of these lifts penetrates to the cellar, and brings up the wine fresh and cool from the deep dark bins; one fetches the fruit and dessert from that bower wherein a pretty girl passes her life engaged in the dispensation of such luxuries; several are perpetually clattering down into the kitchens, and returning laden with different courses, all

set out in order for the particular room, the waiter attached to which is in attendance to receive them. The same order and regularity which pervades the rest of the establishment is brought to play upon the waiters : to each man the plate given out is counted and entered on a record ; each has his own particular cutlery and glass ; each is accountable for everything supplied to him ; each has, as the first instalment of his day's labour, to cut up a huge brown loaf into that timber-yard arrangement of delicious slices, without which no Greenwich dinner would be complete. Added to this, on every floor, in the secret recesses unexplored by the general public, hangs a written code of laws and a table of fines applicable to waiters' irregularities. At the Greenwich houses the majority of the waiters will be found to be foreigners, and they are mostly sons of German innkeepers, many of them men of worldly position, who have come over here to acquire a knowledge of their business, and an insight into the ways of the world. The head-waiter at such a house as *The Vessel* is a superior man ; at large dinners he draws a regular sketch of the table, which is generally in horse-shoe form, and on an average holds thirty-five dishes, seventeen on either side, and a huge centre-piece before the chairman ; he arranges them artistically, and can in an instant denote the exact place of any dish. The daily list of eatables is prepared each morning by the superintendent (one of the partners), and nearly every article is purchased in Greenwich. Some of the fish is purchased in Billingsgate, but most comes from two local fishmongers, who each morning supply a priced tariff of what they have to offer. The meat and nearly all the vegetables are purchased in the neighbourhood ; and with such exactness are *The Vessel*'s books kept, that the precise amount spent in lucifer-matches during the season is entered, and figures with other equally small items in the grand total of the partnership account. What these accounts must be for fish alone may be guessed,

when it is recorded here that between the 1st of April and the 30th of September there is an average consumption of *thirty-five thousand flounders*.

Whitebait, without which there would be no Vessel, and in the minds of a great many people no Greenwich—whitebait, which Theodore Hook called “curl-papers fried in batter,” which most people sneer at as nothing, and which everybody eats with delight—are caught where the water is a little brackish, generally between Barking and Greenhithe, with a net thirty feet long and twelve feet wide. This net is cast always in daylight, either at high or low water, and remains two feet below the surface until nearly the ebb or flood, as the case may be. At the commencement of the spring whitebait first appear, but not in large quantities, as these are old fish who escaped the last year’s netting ; about the middle of April the young fry, perfectly transparent, arrive, and in the first week in May come to perfection. So it continues for a couple of months ; then gradually whitebait get larger and larger, and about the close of September are lost sight of altogether. There is a speciality for dressing “bait ;” and the fisherman who, assisted by his son, for upwards of a score of years has supplied The Vessel, not only catches the whitebait, but cooks them. On a glowing coke-fire is placed a large frying-pan full of boiling lard ; the fish, first thoroughly rolled in flour, are placed in a cloth, which is plunged into the hissing fat. The cook, a perfect salamander, utterly impervious to the frightful heat which makes strangers wink and beat a hasty retreat, takes the handle of the frying-pan and turns it from right to left, peering in at the seething mass. In two minutes the cooking is accomplished, and the fish are emptied out of the cloth on to a dish. Ye who would taste your bait in perfection, get permission to eat it in the kitchen ! Salmon come from the banks of the Severn and Tweed, soles from Texel and Torbay, whiting and mackerel from the South Coast,

smelts from the Medway, turbots from Dover, eels and flounders from the Thames, perch and crayfish from Oxford, lobsters from the coast of Norway, trout principally from Loch Leven, red mullet from the Channel Islands.

Here is an example of the manner in which the Business of Pleasure is carried on with the utmost regularity and precision ; with every precaution of check and counter-check, book-keeping, and all the paraphernalia of ledger-demain which respectability prescribes (in no Manchester cotton-broker's or Liverpool ship-owner's offices could the accounts be more closely kept) ; with the liberal diffusion of a huge capital, and the employment of a large number of hard-working persons.

CHAPTER IV.

RIDING LONDON : OF OMNIBUSES.

WEIGHING thirteen stone, standing six feet high, possessed of an indomitable laziness, and having occasion constantly to go from one part of town to the other, I want to know how I am to have my requirements attended to with ease and comfort to myself. If my name were Schemsiluihar, and I had lived ages ago at Bagdad, I should have gone quietly into the garden, and, after rubbing my ring on my lamp, or burning my incense, I should have prostrated myself before an enormous genie, who would have been very much hurt by my humility, would straightway have proclaimed himself my slave, and, after hearing my wants, would immediately have provided me with four feet square of best Turkey carpet, on which I had only to deposit myself to be wafted through the air to my destination ; or he would have produced a roc for me to sit astride on : or an enchanted horse with a series of pegs in his neck, like a fiddle, the mere manipulation of which increased or checked his speed. But as I happen to live in the benighted year of peace '63, as my name is Nomatter, and as I reside in Little Flotsam Street, Jetsam Gardens, N.W., the carpet, the roc, and the peggy steed are unavailable. I could walk ? Yes, but I won't. I hate walking ; it makes me hot, and uncomfortable, and savage : when walking, I either fall into a train

of thought, or I get gaping at surrounding objects and passing people, both of which feats have the same result, namely, my tumbling up against other pedestrians, straying into the road under the hoofs of horses, and getting myself generally objurgated and hi'd at. I couldn't ride on horse-back, because no man with any sense in his head, combined with any weight in his body, could ride a horse over London's greasy stones. I could ride in a cab, but it is too expensive; in a brougham, but for the same reason doubly magnified, with the additional fact that I do not possess one. Leaving out of the question the absurdity of the proceeding, there is no living man capable of conveying me for several miles in a wheelbarrow; and when I state that I have never yet been the subject of a commission de lunatico, I need offer no further explanation of my declining to ride in a velocipede—a humorous conveyance like the under-carriage of a chariot, the occupant of which apparently rests himself by using his arms as well as his legs for his propulsion.

When I was a boy at school, I recollect in the shop-windows prints of an aerial machine, a delightful conveyance like an enormous bat, sailing over London (which was represented by the dome of St. Paul's and a couple of church-spires), and filled with elegantly-dressed company, who were chatting to each other without the smallest appearance of astonishment. I cannot positively state that there was a captain depicted as in command of this atmospheric vessel, though my belief leans that way; but I perfectly well remember a "man at the wheel," grasping a tiller like a cheese-cutter, and directing the course with the greatest ease and freedom. This would have been an eligible mode of conveyance had the scheme ever been carried out; but the inventor only got as far as the print, and there apparently exhausted himself, as I never heard anything further of it. And this, by the way, reminds me that an occasional trip in Mr. Coxwell's balloon would be a

novel and an exciting method of getting over the ground, only there being no "man at the wheel," there is a consequent absence of definite knowledge as to where you are going; and if I, bent on travelling from Jetsam Gardens to Canonbury Square, were to see Mr. Coxwell looking vaguely out, and were to hear him remarking, "Isn't that Beachy Head?" I should feel uncomfortable.

So I am compelled to fall back on a cheap, easy, and, to a certain extent, expeditious mode of locomotion, and to travel by the omnibus. I am aware that professed cynics will sneer at my use of the word "expeditious." There are, I believe, journeys performed in the middle of the day, when the snail gallops gaily past the outward-bound suburban omnibus, and when the tortoise, having an appointment to keep at the Ship and Turtle, prefers to walk, in order that he may be in time; but the middle of the day is consecrated to old ladies going "into the City" on business, while my experience is confined to the early morning and the late evening, when we run "express," and when, I will venture to wager, we go as fast, the crowded state of the streets considered, as ever did the York Highflyer or the Brighton Age. My associations with omnibuses are from my youth upward. As a child I lived in a very large thoroughfare, and I used to stand for hours at the window watching the red Hammersmith omnibuses, luminous with the name of "GEORGE CLOUD," and the white Putney and Richmond omnibuses, and the green "Favourites," boldly declaring the ownership of "ELIZABETH and JOHN WILSON"—grand 'buses those, with drivers and conductors in green liveries, always renewed (with an accompaniment of nosegay for buttonhole, and favours for whip, and rosettes for horses' ears) on the occasion of the Queen's birthday. I was originally taken to school in a hackney-coach—I perfectly well recollect kneeling at the bottom in the straw as we (I and a broken-hearted aunt)

ascended Highgate Hill, and imploring tearfully to be taken back home, even in the lowest menial capacity—but I came back in an omnibus, in a high state of effervescence, and with a large stock of worldly experience. I first saw her who, as the bagmen's toast says, doubles the pleasures and halves the sorrows of my life, as I stepped off an omnibus. I first went down to my office on an omnibus; and I still patronise that same conveyance, where, I may incidentally mention, I am a “regular,” that I always have the seat next the coachman on the off-side, and that my opinion on the news from America is always anxiously expected by my fellow-passengers. Long since, however, have the omnibuses of my childhood been “run off the road.” Mr. George Cloud and his compeers have retired; and the whole metropolitan service, with very few exceptions, is worked by the London General Omnibus Company; concerning which—its rise, origin, and progress, and the manner in which it is carried on—I have, under proper official authority, made full inquiry, and now intend to report.

If Napoleon the Third had succeeded in his memorable expedition with the tame eagle to Boulogne, it is probable that we in England might still be going on with the old separate proprietary system of omnibuses; but as the tame-eagle expedition (majestic in itself) was a failure, its smaller component parts had to escape as they best could. Among these smaller component parts was one Orsi, captain of the steamer conveying the intruding emperor; and Orsi, flying from justice, flew, after the manner of his kind, to England, and there established himself. Years after, in 1855, this M. Orsi bethought himself of a scheme for simultaneously improving his own fortunes and bettering the condition of London omnibus-traffic, by assimilating its management to that which for a long time had worked admirably in Paris. He accordingly associated with himself a crafty long-headed man of business,

one M. Foucard, and they together drew up such a specious prospectus, that when they submitted it to four of the principal London omnibus-proprietors, Messrs. Macnamara, Wilson, Willing, and Hartley, these gentlemen, all thoroughly versed in their business, so far saw their way, that they at once consented to enter into the proposal, and became the agents for Messieurs Orsi and Foucard. The division of labour then commenced : the Frenchmen started for Paris, there to establish their company (for our English laws on mercantile liability and the dangers of shareholding were, a few years ago, much foggier, and thicker, and less intelligible, and more dangerous than they are now) ; and so well did they succeed, that, in a very short time, they had raised and perfected as a “Société en Commandite” the “Compagnie Générale des Omnibus de Londres,” with a capital of £700,000, in shares of 100 francs (or £4) each ; three-fourths of the capital—such was our neighbours’ belief in our business talents and luck in matters touching upon horse-flesh—being subscribed in France. Meantime, the English section were not idle : as agents for the two Frenchmen they bought up the rolling-stock, horses, harness, stabling, and good-will of nearly all the then existent omnibus-proprietors ; they became purchasers of six hundred omnibuses and six thousand horses, of an enormous staff of coachmen, conductors, time-keepers, horse-keepers, washers, and other workmen ; and, what was very important, they possessed themselves of the “times” of all the important routes in London and the suburbs. These “times” are, in fact, the good-will of the roads, and were considered so valuable, that in some cases as much as from £200 to £250 were given for the “times” of one omnibus. Under this form, then, the company at once commenced work, Messrs. Macnamara, Carteret, and Willing acting as its *gérants* (managers), with no other English legal standing ; and under this form, that is to say, as a French company

with English managers, it worked until the 31st of December, 1857, when, the Limited Liability Act having come into operation, by resolution of the French shareholders the “Société en Commandite” was transformed into an English company, and bloomed-out, in all the glory of fresh paint on all its vehicles, as the London General Omnibus Company (Limited). With this title, and under the managerial arrangements then made, it has continued, ever since.

With the exception of some very few private proprietors and one organised opposition company—the “Citizen”—the entire omnibus service of the metropolis and its suburbs, extending from Highgate in the north to Peckham in the south, and from Hampstead in the north-west to Greenwich in the south-east, embracing more than seventy routes, is worked by—as it is called familiarly—the “London General.” In this traffic are engaged upwards of six hundred omnibuses and six thousand horses, the working of which is divided into ten separate districts, each with a head district establishment. Each of these omnibuses travels on an average sixty miles a day, and to each is attached a stud of ten horses, under the care of a horsekeeper, who is responsible for them, and who knows the exact times when they will be wanted, and whose duty it is to devote himself to them. A horse is seldom changed from one stud to another, or removed, except in case of illness ; each horse is numbered, and all the particulars relating to him are entered in a book kept by the foreman of the yard. The purchase-cost of these horses averages twenty-six pounds apiece, and the majority of them come from Yorkshire, though agents of the company attend all the principal fairs in England. They are of all kinds : long straggling bony hacks, short thick cobs ; some looking like broken-down hunters, some like “cast” dragoon-chargers, some like Suffolk Punches who have come to grief ; but the style most valued is, I am told,

a short thick horse, low in the leg, round in the barrel, and with full strong quarters, whence all the propelling power comes. They are of all colours—blacks, bays, chestnuts, browns, grays—though the predominant shade is that reddish bay so ugly in a common horse, so splendid—more especially when set off by black points—in a velvet-skinned thoroughbred ; a colour particularly affected by the manufacturers of the studs in those toy-stables which are always furnished with a movable groom in top-boots, a striped jacket, and a tasselled cap, with a grin of singular vacuity on his wooden countenance. The average work of each horse is from three to four hours a day, and each horse consumes daily an allowance of sixteen pounds of bruised oats and ten pounds of mixture, formed of three parts hay and one part straw. Their general health is, considering their work, remarkably good ; to attend to it there are eight veterinary surgeons, who are responsible for the health of the whole horse establishment, and who are paid by contract, receiving four guineas a year for each stud of ten horses. The shoeing is also contract work, twenty-five farriers being paid two pounds per month for each stud. At Highbury, where there is a large dépôt of six hundred horses, there are exceptions to both these rules ; a veterinary surgeon and a farrier, each the servant of the company, being attached to the establishment. I went the round of the premises—a vast place, covering altogether some fifteen acres—with the veterinary surgeon, and saw much to praise and nothing to condemn. True, the stables are not such as you would see at Malton, Dewsbury, or any of the great racing establishments, being for the most part long low sheds, the horses being separated merely by swinging bars, and rough litter taking the place of dry beds and plaited straw ; but the ventilation was by no means bad, and the condition of the animals certainly good. My companion told me that glanders, that frightful scourge, was almost unknown ; that sprains, curbs, and

sand-cracks were the commonest disorders ; and that many of his cases resulted from the horses having become injured in the feet by picking up nails in the streets and yards. There are a few loose boxes for virulent contagious disorders and “suspicious” cases, but it appeared to me that more were wanted, and that as “overwork” is one of the most prevalent of omnibus-horse disorders, it would be a great boon if the company could possess itself of some large farm or series of field-paddocks, where such members of their stud as are so debilitated could be turned out to grass to rest for a time. Some such arrangement is, I believe, in contemplation ; but the company has only a short lease of their Highbury premises, and is doubtful as to its future arrangements there. While on this subject I may state that an omnibus horse generally lasts from three to four years, though some are in full work for six or seven, while there are a few old stagers who have been on the road ten or twelve.

The coach-building department also has its head-quarters at Highbury, and employs one hundred and ninety men, whose average wages are two hundred and fifty pounds a week. Here all the omnibuses (with the exception of some six-and-twenty provided by two contractors) are built and repaired, as are also the vans used in conveying the forage to the outlying establishments from the central dépôt (of which more anon), and the chaise-carts and four-wheelers in which the superintendents visit their different districts. Every morning at six A.M. three compact little vans leave Highbury for the various districts, each containing three men, and an assortment of wheels, axles, and tools, for any repairs that may be wanted. One of these men is always left behind at the head district-dépôt, to meet any contingency that may arise during the day. When an accident occurs in the street, an omnibus is immediately despatched to take the place of that which has broken down ; the

“plates” (*i.e.* the legal authorisation of the Inland Revenue) are shifted from one to the other ; and if the smash has been serious, a large van arrives and brings off the disabled omnibus bodily up to Highbury. But such accidents are very rare, owing to the constant supervision given to the axles, tons of which are constantly thrown aside. These axles are all manufactured on the premises, and are composed of ten or twelve pieces of iron “fagoted” together. The trade or cost price of an ordinary omnibus is one hundred and thirty pounds ; but the large three-horse vehicles, which are of tremendous weight (those from Manchester, in use in 1862 plying to the Exhibition, weighed thirty-six cwt.), cost two hundred pounds. The ordinary time of wear is ten years ; after that they are of little use, though some last seventeen years. The wheels require entire renewal every three years, and during that time they are under frequent repairs, the tires lasting but a few months. So soon as an omnibus is condemned, it is broken up ; such portions of it as are still serviceable are used up in repairing other omnibuses, but in a new omnibus every bit is thoroughly new. The condemned omnibuses stand out in an open yard abutting on the line of the North London Railway ; and the superintendent of the coach-builders told me he had often been amused at hearing the loudly-expressed indignation of the railway passengers at the shameful condition of the company’s omnibuses—they imagining that the worn-out old vehicles awaiting destruction, which they saw from their railway carriage-windows, were the ordinary rolling-stock of the London General. The wood used in the composition of the omnibuses is English and American ash, elm, deal, and Honduras ; but the poles are invariably formed of stout English ash. The superintendent told me that these poles last far less time than formerly ; and this he attributes to the stoppages having become so much more frequent, owing to the introduction of short fares ; the strain

upon the pole, occasioned by constant pulling-up, gradually frays the wood and causes an untimely smash. Before I left I was shown an ingenious contrivance for defeating the attacks of those universal enemies, the street-boys. It appears that the passengers of a little omnibus which runs from Highbury Terrace to Highbury Barn, and which, for its short journey, has no conductor, were horribly annoyed by boys who *would* ride on the step and jeer with ribaldry at the people inside. To beat them, my friend the superintendent invented what he calls a “crinoline,” which, when the door is shut, entirely closes the step, and so cuts away any resting-place or vantage-ground for the marauding boy.

The dépôt where all the provender is received, mixed, and served out for all the district establishments, is at Iron-gate Wharf, Paddington, on the banks of the Regent's Canal; a convenient arrangement when it is considered that the barges bring stores to the doors at the rate of fourpence-halfpenny per quarter, while the land-transport for the same would cost one shilling. Hay is, however, generally brought in at the land-gates, for the facility of the weigh-bridge immediately outside the superintendent's office, over which all carts going in or out are expected to pass. There is no settled contractor for hay, but there is no lack of eager sellers, for the company are known to be quick ready-money purchasers, and a transaction with them saves a long day's waiting in the market. On this same account the company are gainers in the deal, to the extent of the expenses which a day's waiting in the market must involve for rest and refreshment for driver and horses. When a sample load is driven into the yard and approved of by the superintendent, a couple of trusses are taken from it and placed under lock and key, to serve as reference for quality; and when the general supply comes in, every truss which is not equal to the quality of the sample is rejected by the foreman, who carefully watches the delivery. The whole of the machinery-

work of the building is performed by steam-power, erected on the basement-floor, and consisting of two engines of two-hundred-and-fifteen-horse power, consuming four tons of coal a week. By their agency the hay received from the country waggons is hoisted in "cradles" to the topmost storey of the building, where it is unpacked from its tightened trusses; to the same floor come swinging up in chain-suspended sacks, the oats from the barges on the canal, and these are both delivered over to the steam-demon, who delivers them, the hay separated and fined, and the oats slightly bruised (not crushed), and freed from all straw and dirt and stones, through wooden shoots and "hoppers," into the floor beneath. There—in the preparation-room—the ever-busy engines show their power in constantly revolving leather bands, in whirling wheels, and spinning knife-blades, and sparkling grindstones; there, are men constantly allaying the incessant thirst of the "cutters" with offerings of mixed hay and straw, which in a second are resolved into a thick impervious mixture; while in another part of the room the bruised oats into which it is to be amalgamated are slowly descending to their doom. All the "cutters" are covered over with tin cases, else the dust germinated from the flying chaff would be insupportable; while at the hand of every man is a break, a simple lever, by the raising of which, in case of any accident, he could at once reverse the action of the machinery. Descending to the next floor, we find the results of the cutters and the bruisers; there, stand stalwart men covered with perspiration, stripped to the shirt-sleeves, and who have large baskets in front of them at the mouths of the shoots, anxiously awaiting their prey. Down comes a mass of chaff, the basket is full, a man seizes it, and empties it into a huge square trough before him; from another shoot, another basket is filled with bruised oats: these he empties into the trough on the top of the chaff; he pauses for one minute; a whistle, forming the top of a pipe

descending into the basement-storey, is heard, that signals “All right and ready.” He turns a handle, and presto! the floor of the trough turns into tumbling waves of metal, which toss the oats and the chaff hither and thither, mix them up, and finally drop them, a heterogeneous mass of horse-food, into sacks waiting their arrival below. Three of these sacks are sent away daily as food for each stud of ten horses; seven large provender-vans are, throughout the whole of the day, conveying sacks to the different district establishments: twenty-six men are engaged at this dépôt, each from six A.M. to six P.M.; and the whole affair works without a hitch.

I have treated of the horse service, the coach-building service, and the foraging service of the company. I may in conclusion come to its human service, the drivers and conductors.

Each man, before entering on his duties, is required to obtain from the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, a license to act. To obtain this, he must give reference to three respectable householders, and deposit five shillings for the expenses attendant on the necessary inquiries and issue of the license. If the references be satisfactory, a license, in printed form, describing the name, address, and general appearance of the holder, is granted, and with it the metal badge to be worn when on duty. These licenses are renewable on the 1st of June in each year, and as the magistrates endorse on the paper every conviction or reprimand, the renewal of the license is necessarily dependent on the possessor showing a clean bill of health. If the driver have no serious blot on his character, and can prove to the satisfaction of the superintendent that he is competent for the management of horses, he is generally at once accepted; but the conductor’s character must stand a greater test. He is virtually the representative of the company on the omnibus, and to him is confided a large amount of discretionary power, such as the refusal to carry intoxicated people, or such persons as by dress,

demeanour, etc., may be “fairly objectionable to passengers.” He is constituted the arbitrator among “brawling passengers,” and has, indeed, a very stringent code of rules laid down for his guidance—one of which is, that he is to “abstain from any approach to familiarity,” which—as in the case of a pretty maid-servant with a not unnatural susceptibility to approach—is, I take it, soul-harrowing and impossible to be carried out. As regards the collection of money, each conductor is provided with a printed form of “journey-ticket,” on which at the end of every journey, he is required to render an account, at some office on the route, of the number of passengers carried, and the amount of moneys received. At the end of the day he makes a summary, on another form, of the whole of his journey-tickets, and next morning he pays over, to the clerk in the office, the money he has received during the previous day, deducting his own wages and those of the driver, and any tolls he may have paid. Every driver receives six shillings a day, every conductor four shillings, out of which the driver has to provide his whip and apron, and the conductor the lamp and oil for the interior of the omnibus. Both classes of men are daily servants, liable to discharge at a day’s warning, but either can rest occasionally by employing an “odd man,” of whom there are several at each district establishment, ready to do “odd” work, from which they are promoted to regular employment.

The receipts of the company are very large, averaging between eleven and twelve thousand pounds a week (in one week of the Exhibition year they were above seventeen thousand pounds), and I asked one of the chief officers if he thought they were much pillaged. He told me he had not the least doubt that, by conductors alone, they were robbed to the extent of *twenty-five thousand pounds a year*; and a practical superintendent of large experience, on my repeating this to him, declared that he believed that sum did not represent the half of their losses from the same source. I

asked whether no check could be devised, and was told none—at least, none so efficient as to be worthy of the name. Indicators of all kinds have been suggested ; but every indicator was at the mercy of the conductor, who could clog it with wood, and so allow three or more persons to enter or depart, while the indicator only recorded the entrance or exit of one ; and unless some such turn-table as the turn-table in use at Waterloo Bridge could be applied (for which there is obviously no space in an omnibus), check was impossible. The sole approach to such check lay in the services rendered by a class of persons technically known as “bookers,” who were, in fact, spies travelling in the omnibus, and yielding to the company an account of every passenger, the length of his ride, and the amount of his fare. But it was only in extreme cases, where the conductor was incautious beyond measure, that such evidence could be efficient against him. These “bookers” are of all classes, men, women, and children, all acting under one head, to whom they are responsible, and who alone is recognised by the company. The best of them is a woman, who, it is boasted, can travel from Islington to Chelsea, and give an exact account of every passenger, where he got in, where he got out, what he was like, and the fare he paid.

I think I have now enumerated most of the prominent features of our omnibus system. When I have casually mentioned to friends the work on which I was engaged, I have been requested to bring forward this grievance and that. Brownsmit, weighing fifteen stone, wants only five persons allowed on one seat; little Iklass, standing four feet six in height, wants easier method of access to the roof. But my intention was description, not criticism ; and even if it were, I doubt whether I should be inclined to represent that any large public body, comparatively recently established, could on the whole be expected to do their work better than the “London General.”

CHAPTER V.

RIDING LONDON : OF CABS, JOBS, AND BLACK JOBS.

THERE is a very large class of Riding London, which, while not sufficiently rich to keep its private carriage, holds omnibus conveyance in contempt and scorn, loathes flys, and pins its vehicular faith on cabs alone. To this class belong lawyers' clerks, of whom, red-bag-holding and perspiration-covered, there are always two or three at the Holborn end of Chancery Lane flinging themselves into Hansoms, and being whirled off to Guildhall or Westminster; to it belong newspaper reporters, with their note-books in their breast-pockets, hurrying up from parliament debates to their offices, there to turn their mystic hieroglyphics into sonorous phrases ; to it belong stockbrokers having "time bargains" to transact ; editors hunting up "copy" from recalcitrant contributors ; artists hurrying to be in time with their pictures ere the stern exhibition-gallery porter closes the door, and, pointing to the clock, says, "It's struck!"—young gentlemen going or coming from Cremorne; and all people who have to catch trains, keep appointments, or do anything by a certain specified time, and who, following the grand governing law of human nature, have, in old ladies' phraseology, "driven everything to the last." To such people a Hansom cab is a primary matter of faith ; and certainly, when provided with a large pair of wheels, a thick

round tubby horse (your thin bony rather blood-looking dancing jumping quadruped lately introduced is no good at all for speed), and a clever driver, there is nothing to compare to it. Not the big swinging pretentious remise of Paris or Brussels ; not the heavy, rumbling, bone-dislocating droskies of Berlin or Vienna, with their blue-bloused accordion-capped drivers ; not the droschky of St. Petersburg, with its vermin-swarming Ischvostchik ; not the shatteradan calesas of Madrid, with its garlic-reeking conductor ! Certainly not the old vaulty hackney-coach ; the jiffling dangerous cabriolet, where the driver sat beside you, and shot you into the street at his will and pleasure ; the "slice," the entrance to which was from the back ; the "tribus," and other wild vehicles which immediately succeeded the extinction of the old cabriolet, which had their trial, and then passed away as failures. There are still about half-a-dozen hackney-coaches of the "good old" build, though much more modest in the matter of paint and heraldry than they used to be ; but these are attached entirely to the metropolitan railway stations, and are only made use of by Paterfamilias with much luggage and many infants on his return from the annual sea-side visit. Cabs, both of the Hansom and Clarence build, are the staple conveyance of middle-class Riding London ; and of these we now propose to treat.

Although there are, plying in the streets, nearly five thousand cabs, there are only some half-dozen large masters who hold from thirty to fifty vehicles each, the remainder being owned by struggling men, who either thrive and continue, or break and relapse into their old position of drivers, horsekeepers, conductors, or something even more anomalous, according to the season and the state of trade. My inquiries on this subject were made of one of the principal masters, whose name I knew from constantly seeing it about the streets, but with whom I had not the

smallest personal acquaintance. I had previously written to him, announcing my intended visit and its object ; but when I arrived at the stables, I found their owner evidently perceiving a divided duty, and struggling between natural civility and an enforced reticence. Yes, he wished to do what was right, Lor' bless me ! but—and here he stopped, and cleared his throat, and looked, prophetically, afar off, over the stables' roof, and at the pigeons careering over Lamb's Conduit Street. I waited and waited, and at last out it came. Would I be fair and 'boveboard ? I would ! No hole-and-corner circumwentin ? I didn't clearly know what this meant, but I pledged my word then there should be none of it. Well, then—was I a agent of this new cab company as he'd heard was about to be started ? Explaining in full detail my errand, I never got more excellent information more honestly and cheerfully given.

My friend had on an average thirty-five cabs in use, and all of these were built on his own premises and by his own men. There was very little, if any, difference between the price of building a Hansom or a Clarence cab, the cost of each, when well turned out, averaging fifty guineas. To every cab there are, of necessity, two horses : but a careful cab-master will allow seven horses to three cabs, the extra animal being required in case of overwork or illness, either or both of which are by no means of unfrequent occurrence. These horses are not bought at any particular place, but are picked up as opportunity offers. Aldridge's and the Repository in Barbican furnish many of them. Many are confirmed "screws," some are well-bred horses with unmistakable symptoms of imminent disease, others with incurable vice—incurable, that is to say, until after a fortnight's experience of a Hansom's shafts, when they generally are reduced to lamb-like quietude. There is no average price, the sums given varying from ten to five-and-twenty pounds ; nor can their lasting qualities be reduced to an average, as

some knock up and are consigned to the slaughterer after a few weeks; while other old stagers battle with existence for a dozen years. In the season, cabs are generally out on a stretch of fifteen hours, going out between nine or ten A.M., returning to change horses between three and five P.M., starting afresh, and finally returning home between midnight and one A.M. Of course there are cabs which leave the yard and return at earlier times, and during the height of the Cremorne festivities there are many which do not go out till noon, and seldom appear again at the stables until broad daylight about four A.M. These are far from being the worst paid of the cab fraternity ; as a visit to Cremorne, and a mingling in its pleasures, is by no means productive of stinginess to the cabman, but occasionally results in a wish on the part of the fare to ride on the box, to drive the horse, and to proffer cigars and convivial refreshment on every possible occasion. Each cabman on starting carries a horse-bag with him containing three feeds of mixed chaff, which horse-bag is replenished before he leaves for his afternoon trip. The cab-masters, however, impress upon their men the unadvisability of watering their horses at inn-yards or from watermen's pails, as much disease is generated in this manner.

The monetary arrangements between cab-masters and cabmen are peculiar. The master pays his man no wages ; on the contrary, the man hires horse and vehicle from his master ; and having to pay him a certain sum, leaves his own earnings to chance, to which amicable arrangement we may ascribe the conciliatory manners and the avoidance of all attempts at extortion which characterise these gentry. For Clarence cabs the masters charge sixteen shillings a day, while Hansoms command from two to three shillings a day extra ; and they are well worth it to the men, not merely from their ordinary popularity, but just at the present time, when, as was explained, there is a notion in the minds of

most old ladies that every four-wheel cab has just conveyed a patient to the Small-Pox Hospital, the free open airy Hansoms are in great demand. In addition to his lawful fares, the perquisites or "pickings" of the cabman may be large. To him the law of treasure-trove is a dead letter ; true, there exists a regulation that all property left in any public vehicle is to be deposited with the registrar at Somerset House; but a very small percentage finds its way to that governmental establishment. The cabman has, unwittingly, a great reverence for the old feudal system, and claims over anything which he may seize the right of free-warren, saccage and soccage, cuisage and jambage, fosse and fork, infang theofe, and outfang theofe ; and out of all those portemonnaies, pocket-books, reticules, ladies' bags, portmanteaus, cigar-cases, deeds, documents, books, sticks, and umbrellas, duly advertised in the second column of *The Times* as "left in a cab," very few find their way to Somerset House. I knew of an old gentleman of muddle-headed tendencies who left four thousand pounds' worth of Dutch coupons, payable to bearer, in a hack Clarence cab ; years have elapsed, and despite all the energies of the detective police and the offer of fabulous rewards, those coupons have never been recovered, nor will they be until the day of settlement arrives, when the adjudication as to who is their rightful owner—with a necessarily strong claim on the part of their then possessor—will afford a pretty bone of contention for exponents of the law. All that the driver has to find as his equipment, is his whip—occasionally, by some masters, lost nose-bags are placed to his account—and having provided himself with that, and his license, he can go forth.

But there is a very large class of London people to whom the possession of a private carriage of their own is the great ambition of life, a hope long deferred, which, however sick it has made the heart for years, coming at last

yields an amount of pleasure worth the waiting for. Nine-tenths of these people job their horses. Those pretty, low-quartered, high-crested brougham-horses, with the champing mouths and the tossing heads, which career up and down the Ladies' Mile ; those splendid steppers, all covered with fleck and foam, which the bewigged coachman tools round and round Grosvenor Square while "waiting to take up ;" those long, lean-bodied, ill-looking, but serviceable horses which pass their day in dragging Dr. Bolus from patient to patient—all are jobbed. It is said that any man of common sense setting up his carriage in London will job his horses. There are four or five great job-masters in town who have the best horses in the metropolis at command, and who are neither dealers nor commission-agents, but with whom jobbing is the sole vocation. And, at a given price, they can, at a few days' notice, provide you with any class of animal you may require. Either in person, or by a trusty agent, they attend all the large horse-fairs in the kingdom ; or should they by any chance be unrepresented there, they are speedily waited on by the dealers, who know the exact class of horse which the job-master requires. Horses are bought by them at all ages, from three to seven. Young horses are broken-in at four years old, and when their tuition is commenced in the autumn, they are generally found ready for letting in the succeeding spring. The breaking-in is one of the most difficult parts of the job-master's business. The young horse is harnessed to a break by the side of an experienced old stager, known as a "break-horse," who does nothing but "break" work, who is of the utmost assistance to the break-driver, and who, when thoroughly competent, is beyond all price. Such a break-horse will put up with all the vagaries of his youthful companion ; will combine with the driver to check all tendencies on the part of the neophyte to bolt, shy, back, or plunge ; and if his young friend be stubborn, or devote himself to jibbing or standing

stock-still, will seize him by the neck with his teeth, and, by a combination of strength and cunning, pull him off and set him in motion.

The prices charged by job-masters vary according to the class of horse required and according to the length of the job. Many country gentlemen bringing their families to London for the season hire horses for a three or six months' job, and they have to pay in proportion a much higher rate than those who enter into a yearly contract. For the very best style of horse, combining beauty, action, and strength, a job-master will charge a hundred guineas a year, exclusive of forage; but the best plan for the man of moderate means, who looks for work from his horses in preference to show, and who has neither time, knowledge, nor inclination to be in a perpetual squabble with grooms and corn-chandlers, is to pay for his horses at a certain price which includes forage and shoeing. Under these conditions, the yearly price for one horse is ninety guineas; for a pair, one hundred and sixty guineas; and for this payment he may be certain of getting sound, serviceable, thoroughly creditable-looking animals (which he may himself select from a stud of two or three hundred), which are well fed by the job-master, and shod whenever requisite by the farrier nearest to the hirer's stables, to whom the job-master is responsible, and which, when one falls lame or ill, are replaced in half an hour. Having made this arrangement, the gentleman setting up his carriage has only to provide himself with stables, which, with coach-house, loft, and man's room, cost from twenty pounds to thirty pounds a year; to hire a coachman, costing from one guinea to twenty-five shillings a week; to purchase a carriage-setter (a machine for hoisting the wheels, to allow of their being twirled for proper cleaning), and the ordinary pails, brushes, and sponges, and to allow a sum for ordinary expenses, which, according to the extravagance or economy of his coachman, will stand him in from six pounds to

twelve pounds a year. If more than two horses are kept, the services of a helper, at twelve shillings a week, will be required ; and it is scarcely necessary to add, that if day and night service have to be performed, at the end of three months neither horses nor coachman will fulfil their duties in a satisfactory manner. Indeed, there are several otherwise lucrative jobs which the job-masters find it necessary to terminate at the end of the first year ; the acquisition of “their own carriage” proving such a delight to many worthy persons that they are never happy except when exhibiting their glory to their friends, and this is aided by ignorant, unskilful, and cheap drivers taking so much out of their hired cattle as utterly to annihilate any chance of gain on the part of the real proprietor of the animal.

As a provision for sick or overworked horses, each principal job-master has a farm within twenty miles of London, averaging about two hundred acres, where, in grassy paddocks or airy loose-boxes, the debilitated horses regain the health and condition which the constant pelting over London stones has robbed them of. Generally speaking, however, the health of a jobbed horse is wonderful. In the first place, he is never purchased unless perfectly sound, and known by the best competent judges to be thoroughly fitted for the work which he is likely to undergo ; then he is fed with liberality (six feeds a day are on the average allowed when in full work) ; and, lastly, there is generally a certain sense of decency in his hirer which prevents him from being overworked. This fact, however, is very seldom realised until a gentleman, urged by the apparent economy of the proceeding, determines upon buying a brougham-horse and feeding it himself. On the face of it, this looks like an enormous saving. The horse is to cost—say from sixty to eighty pounds, the cost of keep is fourteen shillings a week, of shoeing four pounds a year. But in nine cases out of ten owned horses take cold, throw out splints or curbs,

pick up nails, begin to “roar,” or in some fashion incapacitate themselves for action during so large a portion of the year, that their owner is glad to get rid of them, and to return again to the jobbing system.

Although most job-masters profess to let saddle-horses on job yet—for yearly jobs, at least—there is seldom a demand for them. A saddle-horse is in general a petted favourite with its owner, who would not regard with complacency the probability of its being sent, on his leaving town, to some ignorant or cruel rider. So that the jobbing in this department is principally confined to the letting of a few horses for park-riding in the London season. For these from eight to ten guineas a month are paid, and the animals provided are in most cases creditable in appearance, and useful enough when the rider is a light-weight and a good horseman; heavy men, unaccustomed to riding, had better at once purchase a horse, on the advice of some competent person; as hired hacks acquire, under their various riders, certain peculiarities of stumbling, backing, and shying, which render them very untrustworthy. Some job-masters have a riding-school attached to their premises, and whenever an evident “green hand” comes to hire a hack for a term, the job-master, who reads him like a book, asks, with an air of great simplicity, whether he is accustomed to riding. In nine cases out of ten the answer will be, “Well, scarcely!—long time since—in fact, not ridden since he was a boy;” and then the job-master recommends a few days in the school, which, to quote the words of the card of terms, means “six lessons when convenient, £2 2s.”

Probably the next day the victim will arrive at the school, a large barn-like building, and will find several other victims, old and young, undergoing tuition from the riding-master, a man in boots, with limbs of steel and lungs of brass, who stands in the middle of the school, and thence roars his commands. This functionary, with one glance, takes stock

of the new arrival's powers of equitation, and orders a helper to bring in one of the stock-chargers for such riders, a strong old horse, knowing all the dodges of the school, and accustomed, so far as his mouth is concerned, to the most remarkable handling. He comes in, perhaps, with a snort and a bound, but stands stock-still to be mounted—a ceremony which the pupil seems to think consists in grasping handfuls of the horse's mane, and flinging himself bodily on to the horse's back. The stern man in boots advances and gives him proper instruction ; off starts the horse, and takes his position at the end of a little procession which is riding round the school. Then upon the pupil's devoted head comes a flood of instruction. Calling him by name, the riding-master tells him that "Position is everything, sir ! Don't sit your horse like a sack ! Body upright, elbows square, clutch the horse with that part of the leg between the knee and the ankle, toes up, sir"—this is managed by pressing the heel down—"where are you turning them toes to, sir ? Keep 'em straight, pray ! Tr-r-ot !" At the first sound of the familiar word the old horse starts off in the wake of the others, and the rider is jerked forward, his hat gradually works either over his eyes or on to his coat-collar, his toes go down, his heels go up, he rows with his legs as with oars. When the word "Cantarr !" is given, he is reduced to clinging with one hand to the pommel ; but this resource does not avail him, for at the command "Circle left !" the old horse wheels round unexpectedly, and the new pupil pitches quietly off on the tan-covered floor. The six lessons, if they do not make him a perfect Nimrod, are, however, very useful to him ; they give him confidence, and he learns sufficient to enable him to present a decent appearance in the Row. (Until a man has ridden in London, he is unaware of the savagery of the boy population, or of their wonderful perseverance in attempting to cause fatal accidents.) These riding-schools are good

sources of income to the job-master, and are generally so well patronised that the services of a riding-master and an assistant are in requisition, with very little intermission, from seven A.M. till seven P.M. The middle of the day is devoted to the ladies, who sometimes muster very strongly. In the winter evenings the school is also much used by gentlemen keeping their private hacks at livery with the job-master ; and being warm, well-lighted, and spacious, it forms a capital exercise-ground. These schools are also much frequented by foreigners, for the sake of the leaping-bar practice, which enables them to prepare themselves for the gymnastic evolutions of “ Fox-Ont.”

Having treated of the arrangements in force in London for those who ride in omnibuses, cabs, private carriages, and on horseback, we now come to the preparation for that last journey which one day or other must be made by us all, and which has its own peculiar staff of vehicles, horses, and attendants.

The black-job or black-coach business (as it is indifferently called) of London is in the hands of four large proprietors, who manage between them the whole vehicular funeral arrangements of the metropolis. These men are wholly distinct from the undertakers ; they will take no direct orders from the public, but are only approachable through the undertakers, whose contract for the funeral includes conveyance. They provide hearse, mourning-coaches, horses, and drivers ; and one of their standing rules is, that no horse can be let without a driver, that is, that none of their horses must be driven by persons not in their employ. These horses are fine, strong, handsome animals, costing £50 apiece, and are all imported from Holland and Belgium. They are all entire horses, no mares are ever used in the trade, and their breeding—for what reason I know not—is never attempted in this country. They are mostly of a dull blue-black colour, but they vary

in hue according to their age ; and, as their personal appearance is always closely scanned by bystanders, they are the recipients of constant care. A gray patch is quickly painted out ; and when time has thinned any of the flowing locks of mane or tail, a false plait, taken from a deceased comrade, is quickly interwoven. They are for the most part gentle and docile, but very powerful, and often have to drag their heavy burdens a long distance. The black-job masters manufacture their own hearses, at a cost of forty-five pounds each ; but mourning-coaches are never built expressly for their dreary work. They are nearly all old fashionable chariots, which, at their birth, were the pride of Long Acre, and in their heyday the glory of the Park ; but which, when used up, are bought for the black-job business, and covered with japan, varnish, and black cloth ; are re-lined with the same sad colour ; and thus, at an expense not exceeding thirty-five pounds, including the cost, are changed into mourning-coaches, likely to be serviceable in their new business for many years.

Among other items of information, I learned that Saturday is looked upon as the aristocratic day for funerals, while poor people are mostly buried on Sunday ; that there is a very general wish among undertakers that cemeteries should be closed on Sundays ; that very frequently no hearse is employed, the coffin being placed crossway under the coachman's seat, and hidden by the hammercloth ; that in cheap funerals one horse has often to convey from eight to twelve passengers ; and that, after the ceremony is over, the most effectual thing to stanch the flow of mourners' grief is often found to be a game of skittles at the nearest public-house, accompanied by copious libations of beer.

CHAPTER VI.

RIDING LONDON: OF THE PARCELS-DELIVERY COMPANY AND “PICKFORD'S.”

YEARS ago, not merely when “this old cloak was new,” but when this old cloak (which I never possessed, by-the-way, and which is a mere figurative garment to be hung on pegs of trope or hooks of metaphor) was a short jacket, ornamented with liquorice-marks and fruit-stains, and remarkably puffy in the region of the left breast with a concealed pegtop, half a munched apple, and a light trifle of flint-stone used in the performance of a game called “duck,” I was presented with a serviceable copy of Shakespeare, and immediately entered on an enthusiastic study of the same. In a very little time I had made such progress as to identify very many persons with the characters in the plays; thus, a hump-backed blacksmith, a morose ill-conditioned fellow, always snarling at us boys over the half-hatch door of his forge, stood for Caliban; the fat man with the bald head, who was always taking turnpike-tickets with one hand and mopping himself with the other, was obviously Falstaff; the headmaster was Prospero (somewhat hazy this, but if I remember rightly, a confused mixture of the former's cane and the latter's wand); the French usher was Dr. Caius; and Sneesh, the tobacconist and newsvendor, whose shop-door was graced by a wooden Highlander, a perfect

Tantalus, in the way he was always expecting a pinch of snuff and never got it, was Macbeth. Nor were the minor characters unfilled. I particularly remember that I identified the proprietor of the oil-and-pickle shop in the High Street as Rumour—perhaps on account of his establishment being “full of tongues ;” while both the famous carriers of the Rochester Inn Yard, those good fellows who wanted Cut’s saddle beaten, who so heartily abused the oats, who had a gammon of bacon and two razes of ginger to be delivered as far as Charing Cross, and who showed such an invincible disinclination to lend Gadshill a lantern, were embodied in Cokeham, who connected us with the metropolis. A sharp, clever, ’cute man, Cokeham, with a moist eye and a red nose, and an invariable crape ’hatband, respected by the masters, popular with the boys (we made a subscription for him when his gray mare was supposed to have staked herself in the night in Upton’s fields, and bought him a fresh horse, only regretting our money when we learned that Cokeham himself had staked her to trot against a butcher’s horse, and won the match, and had then sold her for fifteen pounds to the loser), punctual in his delivery of home-sent cakes and play-boxes, and never “telling” when a shower of stones would rattle against his tilted cart as he passed the playground wall. There was not very much difference, possibly, between the Rochester carriers of Henry the Fourth’s time and Cokeham. Until very lately, “carrying” seems to have been a fine old Conservative institution, and with the exception of the substitution of a tilted-cart for Cut’s pack-saddle, and a few other minor details of that kind, to have gone on in a very jog-trot fashion. In a small and very humble fashion the Rochester men, even to this day, have their descendants : walking through some behindhand suburb, one may still observe a parlour-window decorated with a small placard bearing a capital letter of the alphabet, a bouncing B, or a dropsical

and swollen S—the initial letter of Bolland, or Swubble, the village-carrier, who furnishes his clients with these mystic symbols of indication, to be placed in the window when his services are required.

But so far as London and what is commonly known as the London district are concerned, the old body of carriers has been entirely superseded by the London Parcels-Delivery Company, which was established in 1837, and which, after many severe struggles at the outset, has become a recognised and necessary institution, admirably conducted, serviceable to the public, and remunerative to its shareholders. Its principal establishment is in Rolls' Yard, Fetter Lane, where the whole of the practical detail is devised and carried out under the superintendence of a manager, who has been in the company's service since its earliest days. The plan originated by the Post Office, and in force therein until the recent division of London into districts, is followed by the Parcels-Delivery Company. Every parcel collected for delivery is brought into Rolls' Yard, and sent out thence, even though it was originally only going from one street in the suburb to another a hundred yards off, and this is found to afford the only efficient system of check. In all respectable and thriving neighbourhoods, at graduated distances according to the amount of business to be done, the company has its agents for the receipt of the parcels to be conveyed. These agents, who are paid by a percentage on the number and amount of their transactions, were at the outset nearly all keepers of Post-office Receiving-houses. It was naturally thought that such persons would be the most respectable in their various neighbourhoods, and their holding their little government appointments was a guarantee of their position. But, like other great creatures, the Post Office has its weakness, one of which is found to be an overweening jealousy; it ill

brooked the divided attention which its receivers bestowed upon the Parcels-Delivery Company ; but when rivals started up and called themselves the Parcel Post and Parcel Mail, then St. Martin-le-Grand rose up in fury, called to his aid the services of the redoubtable Mr. Peacock, well known in connection with dishonest postmen and mornings at Bow Street ; and having, with the great hammer of the law, smashed the rash innovators who had dared to appropriate those sacred words “post” and “mail,” which a sagacious legislature has dedicated solely to St. Martin’s use, St. Martin issued an edict forbidding his servants to have anything to do with receipt or despatch of parcels for whatsoever company, and commanding them to serve him and him alone. So since then the company have selected the best agents they could find, furnishing them with a blue board, with a well-executed picture of a delivery-cart proceeding at a rapid rate—which board, in many instances, is imitated as closely as possible by the carrier of the vicinity, who places it at the door of a neighbouring shop, and, thanks to the heedlessness and ignorance of domestic servants generally, obtains a certain share of the patronage intended for the company.

Again, following the example of the Post Office, the Parcels-Delivery Company have an inner and an outer circle, one not exceeding three miles from Rolls’ Yard, the other extending somewhat over twelve miles from the same point. The farthest places embraced are Twickenham Common in the south-west, and Plumstead in the south-east. In the far-lying districts there are two deliveries a day ; nearer localities have four deliveries. There is a small difference in the rates charged between the two “circles ;” but in both the collection and delivery are made by the ordinary carts, though in the City, where the general class of parcels is cumbrous and weighty, the collections are made by pair-horse vans.

The company possesses about eighty carts and about a

hundred and sixty horses. Although there are some thirty stables scattered about London belonging to it, the majority of the horses, about a hundred, are stabled in Rolls' Yard. They are good serviceable-looking animals, better in stamp and shape than either the omnibus or the cab-horses, being larger boned, stronger, and altogether less "weedy"-looking; they cost more too, averaging forty pounds apiece. Each horse works five days out of the seven, and covers in his journeys about thirty miles a day. To every cart are attached a driver, and a boy who acts as deliverer; the former with wages of twenty-five shillings a week, the latter fourteen shillings, with such little perquisites as they may obtain from the public. The general conduct of these men and lads is, I was told, excellent, and never—save at Christmas, when the generosity of the public takes the form of gin—is there any irregularity. Then, looking at the extra work imposed on them, the rigidity of discipline is wholesomely relaxed, and the superintending eye suffers itself to wink a little. For at Christmas the labour in Rolls' Yard is tremendous. During the four days preceding Christmas Day last year (1864), upwards of thirty-two thousand parcels, principally of geese, turkeys, game, oyster-barrels, and cheeses, were conveyed by the company. At such a time the manager does not take off his clothes, and looks upon sleep as an exceptional luxury.

I had proceeded thus far in my "carrying" experiences, and was debating where to turn for further information, when the question was settled ~~for~~ me—as many questions are—by my friends, enterprising creatures who rushed at me, crying "Pickford's!" Old gentlemen told me how this very firm of Pickford's had been carriers by land upwards of a century, even before canals were introduced by the Duke of Bridgewater in 1758; how that they then commenced the water-traffic, and carried it on with the same regularity as they do their present business, but in rather a different manner, as it then took five days to convey goods

from London to Manchester—a feat which is now performed in twelve hours. Young gentlemen were full of the reckless daring of Pickford's drivers, the power of Pickford's horses, and the weight of Pickford generally. Ladies, young and old, agreed in condemning Pickford as a “horrid” person, who blocked up the road perpetually, and prevented cabs and carriages drawing up at shop-doors. So I decided on calling upon Pickford—who, by-the-way, is not Pickford at all—and having been most courteously received, and accredited for all the information I required to a practical gentleman, whose kindness and readily-given information I hereby acknowledge, I set to work to take Pickford's measure, and to find out all about him.

I first called on Pickford—who is not Pickford—in Wood Street, at the Castle Inn—which is not an inn, and which has not the least appearance of ever having been one; for Pickford has so gutted it and twisted it for his own purposes; has thrown out so much yard, constantly resounding with champing horses and lumbering vans; has enclosed so much gallery; has established so many offices, public and private; has so perforated it with speaking-tube and telegraph-wire; and has so completely steeped the place in business, doing away with any appearance of inn-comfort and hotel-luxury, that the idea of anybody's taking his ease in his Castle Inn is ridiculous on the face of it. Here Pickford, who is not Pickford, and of whom it may be further remarked that he is three gentlemen rolled into one, has his head-quarters for correspondence and general management; but here he professes to have nothing to show us beyond the ordinary routine of a mercantile office, of course marked with the special individuality of the carrying business. Wanting to see Pickford in full work, I must go to one of his dépôts—Camden Town, City Basin, Haydon Square in the Minories, which will I visit? I choose Camden Town.

At Camden Town—inevitably abbreviated in Pick-

fordian language into Camden — Pickford, who is the recognised agent of the London and North-Western Railway Company, has enormous premises adjoining the goods-station, and is to be seen in full swing. Employing more than nine hundred horses in London, he keeps three hundred of them at Camden. Going into these stables, we are at once struck with an air of substantiality in connection with Pickford, which is different from anything we have yet seen during this tour of inspection of the ways and means of "Riding London." There is special potentiality in his stables, with their asphalte pavements and their large swinging oaken bars, in his big horses, in his strong men, in his enormous vans. Most of the horses are splendid animals, many of them standing over sixteen hands high, and all in excellent condition. They are all bought by one man, the recognised buyer for the establishment, who attends the principal fairs throughout the country ; the average cost-price of each is forty-five pounds. They are fed on a mixture of bruised oats, crushed Indian corn, and peas, which is found to be capital forage. Each horse, when bought, is branded with a number on the front of his fore-feet hoofs, and is named ; name and number are entered in the horse-book ; and by them the horse's career, where he may be working, and anything special relating to him, is checked off until he dies or is sold. Pickford's horses last on an average seven or eight years, and then they are killed ; but in many instances, when no longer fit for roughing it over the stones—for what the dealer poetically described as the "'ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer on the 'ard 'igh road"—they will be bought by some farmer for plough work ; and, after a hard London life, will peacefully end their days in some secluded village. The last duty which some of them perform while in Pickford's service is to pull the trucks which arrive by the line under the shed. These trucks, arriving in long strings from all parts of the line, are shunted into an enormous covered space, and are then

unloaded on what is called the “bank,” a broad landing-stage, on the other side of which are the empty vans ready to receive the goods, and carry them off to the various districts into which Pickford, in common with the Post Office, has divided London. On this bank are placed at intervals numerous desks, by each of which is a weigh-bridge. By the truck which is being unloaded stands a clerk, known as the “caller-off,” with the invoice in his hand ; he shouts out the description, destination, and proper weight of each article to the clerk at the desk ; the load is placed on the weigh-bridge, and, found correct, is freshly invoiced, and sent off by van. We observed a very miscellaneous collection of articles here—chairs, fenders, barrels, looking-glasses, pottery, and an open basket of Welsh mutton, merely covered by an old newspaper. There are very few accidents here, and, it is believed, very little undetected theft. Printed documents relating to the conviction of recently-discovered culprits—one of whom we read was a “sheeter”—were freely stuck about the walls. The goods, being packed in vans, are then sent off to their destination. The vans are very strong, and, judged by the weight they carry, tolerably light. They are all built by one firm in the Borough, at a cost-price of about eighty pounds each. The foot-board for the driver folds up on a hinge—a very convenient arrangement—and immediately under the seat there is a “boot,” for holding the macintosh cover for goods, with which each driver is supplied. In these vans a ton and a half in weight is allowed for each horse ; that is to say, a full three-horse van carries between four and five tons, never more. All the vans, entering or leaving the establishment, pass over a weigh-bridge, by which, in a glass case, sit two clerks. If the van prove too heavily loaded, it is sent back to be lightened. Each van has a number conspicuously painted on it ; and the number, the name of the driver, the number of his invoice, and his place of destination, are all duly entered by the clerks in the glass-case. Each team of horses

takes out for delivery and returns with two loads of goods daily. The bulk of the goods arrive by night-trains, and are at once sent out ; indeed, Manchester goods are at their consignee's door as soon as the invoice announcing their arrival is delivered by the morning's post. Every van has a driver and a "book-carrier," who acts as conductor and delivers the goods. At night, when his van is unloaded, and after its final journey, the book-carrier goes to his head office, and "books his work"—which means giving a detailed and statistical account of his transactions during the day. These accounts are then sent to Wood Street, and there duly filed.

Before leaving Camden I went into the vaults, now used as store-cellars for pale ale by Messrs. Bass, but formerly Pickford's stables. These stables, holding three hundred horses, were full on the night when a great fire broke out, some seven years ago (1857). The horse-keepers go off duty at eleven P.M. About half-an-hour before that time the foreman of the stables discovered that another portion of the premises was on fire. The stables were shut off by large gates still standing. The key of these gates the foreman had about him ; with great presence of mind he rushed off and unlocked the gates, and called to the horse-keepers to let loose all the horses. The order was obeyed, the horses were untied, and, amid the whoops and shouts of the helpers, came out three hundred strong, charging up the incline and tearing into the streets. Away they went, unfollowed and unsought for ; but of all those horses not one was lost. All were brought in during the succeeding few days from all parts of London, whither they had fled in their fright ; but none were stolen, and none were damaged. Only one horse was burnt, a very big beast, known as a "waggon-sitter," and used for backing the waggons under cranes or against the "banks." He was a dangerous brute, and so violent that only one man could manage him. This man unloosed him, but he would not move, and he was burnt in his stall.

Pickford is at home in about ten other places in London, besides having country-houses agreeably situate at Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and where not. But I visited him at only one other residence—a little villa on the City Basin of the Regent's Canal, where, before railway times, all his principal business was transacted. Everything here was carried on much in the same manner as at Camden, the only noticeable feature being what is called the “order warehouse,” corresponding very much to the “cloak-room” of a metropolitan railway-station, a receptacle for things left till called for. To this order warehouse are sent Manchester goods or silks bought at a favourable turn of the market, and left in store until required to be despatched for foreign consignment or country trade. Here, among this heterogeneous assemblage, we saw casks of glue from France; bales of stockings and hosiery from Leicester; sewing-machines, their stands and cases, in vast numbers from America; barrels of soda-ash; a large church-organ; the boiler of a steam-engine; baskets of shells; piles of cheeses; two or three hip-baths; a bit of sacking full of bones; several spruce trunks; a sailor's chest; a packet of wire for bonnet-shapes; a parcel of theatrical wardrobes; a packet of vermin-destroying powder, etc. etc. All these wait either a long or a short time, as the case may be, in Pickford's custody; but it very rarely happens that they are not eventually reclaimed.

When I took farewell of Pickford, who is not Pickford, I left him with a smile upon his face—a smile which seemed to say: “You've got a smattering of me, a taste, a notion; but it would take you months to learn all my business.” I nodded in reply, on the Lord Burleigh principle, intending my nod to convey that I knew all that, but that I had got sufficient for my purpose; the rest was his business, and very well he does it.

CHAPTER VII.

MY EXCURSION AGENT.*

VAST numbers of people are, for a comparatively trifling sum, conveyed from one large town to another, or from the heart of a populous neighbourhood to sylvan scenery or picturesque surroundings, and then, after a few days' revel in the unwonted peace and air and freedom, are taken back to their work-a-day life. Wanting to know something of the statistics and general management of the enormous excursion-trains which, during the summer months, convey them, I sought for the longest-established manager of such expeditions, and found him at home nestling in a large newly-fronted house, under the shadow of the British Museum. The front door of this house, on which was a large brass plate duly inscribed with the excursion agent's honoured name, stood open, and by the side of a glass door within, where the visitors' bell is usually to be found, I read the word "Office," and entering, found my agent awaiting my anticipated arrival. The house is, as I afterwards learned, a private hotel; but the neighbourhood being severely

* The Excursion Agent here described is Mr. Thomas Cook, of Great Russell Street, London, and Granby Street, Leicester. After this article appeared in *All the Year Round*, I had many letters of inquiry from unknown correspondents. I referred them all to Mr. Cook, and I have reason to believe that none of them regretted the recommendation.

respectable, and the neighbours objecting to anything so low as a public announcement on a board, my agent defers to their prejudices, describes his house as a boarding-house, or receptacle for his customers while in town ; and, being a Temperance man himself, conducts his establishment on strict Temperance principles. And at the very outset of our conversation my agent let me know that he was not a contractor for excursion trains or trips, that he had no responsibility, and that the work was entirely performed by the railway companies over which the trips were taken ; that he made suggestions as to the routes, etc. ; that his profit accrued from head-money or percentage on those whom he induced to travel ; in fact that he was a traveller on commission for various railway companies, in which capacity he paid all his own advertising, generally a heavy amount.

For more than twenty-three years my agent has been at this work, arranging excursions between England and Scotland, during which time more than a million passengers have been under his charge. He has arrangements with every railway company that can be made available for Scotch trips, and sometimes begins to gather the nucleus of his company far away in the extreme west of England, then sweeping up the West Cornwall, the Cornwall and South Devon, the Bristol and Exeter, the Midland, the North-Eastern, and the North British railways, he reaches Edinburgh, into which city he will pour more than a couple of thousand people by special trains within a period of twenty-four hours.

My agent does not profess to make hotel arrangements for his flock, but he takes care to advise hotel-keepers of a coming influx ; and he thinks that hotel-keepers in the Highlands and elsewhere are kept in order by a list of their prices being published in his programme. At some places far away, such as Bannavie, in the West Highlands, by Fort William, and Braemar, at the period of the Highland

gathering and games, there has been a pressure, but *something* has always been arranged ; for the hotel-keepers, who at first were disposed to snub my agent as importing the wrong kind of article for them, now eagerly looked for his countenance and recommendation. At Oban he had established a set of lodgings, which he found operated as a wholesome check on the hotels. To carry people, not to feed them, is my agent's business ; and, as a rule, he declines to enter into any agreement for boarding and lodging his troop, but, if they wish it, he will settle all their hotel bills on the road, and present them for discharge at the end of the trip ; and it speaks highly for the honesty of excursionists, when he declares that during his whole experience he has never made a bad debt amongst them, or lost a farthing by them. Had he ever been asked to lend any of them money ? Frequently ; and had never refused. He had lent as much as twenty pounds to one of his excursionists, an entire stranger to him, and had always been repaid. Had he taken any security ? Not he. Sometimes a gentleman would offer his watch ; but what did he want with a gentleman's watch ? He told him to put it in his pocket again.

At Edinburgh the thousands disperse, and start off on different routes, according to the length of their holiday and the depth of their purses. Those who know the country, young men, and spirited people start off alone. Ladies and inexperienced persons remain in the flock, and go the tour, supervised by my agent, in a party, numbering sometimes as many as two hundred and fifty, half of whom are ladies. The ordinary tickets are useful only as far as Edinburgh, but there are offices in all the large towns in Scotland at which fresh tickets for further extended trips can be obtained. And here my agent, chuckling audibly, informs me that his tickets for coaches always have precedence, where, as is frequently the case, the vehicular supply is not equal to the

tourist demand ; and the coach-proprietors being, in most cases, also hotel-proprietors, it is not to be wondered at that there is loud and frequent grumbling from the outside public at the best places in inns and on the coaches being given to the excursionists. Of these extended trips, the most favourite is that including Glasgow and Inverness, Staffa, and Iona ; the reason, perhaps, being that it is one of the cheapest as well as the loveliest, and with it there is connected a circumstance of great interest. For, with a certain amount of proper pride, my agent tells me that a series of improvements which, during the last few years, has been made in the condition of the poor fishing population of Staffa and Iona, is principally due to his excursionists. When they are inspecting the old cathedral at Iona, my agent takes the opportunity of introducing the subject of the natives' poverty and their hard lives, and appeals to the generosity of his flock ; the excursionists, holiday-making and happy, are in proper cue for the reception of such an appeal, and respond liberally ; so liberally, that by their subscriptions twenty-four fishing-boats have been built for the poor fishermen of the place. Many poor boys from these desolate regions have also been provided with comfortable situations in large towns. My agent also informs me that, during his whole experience, he has never had an accident with any of his people, that no one has ever been taken ill—nothing beyond a little over fatigue, no serious illness—and that he has had constant cases of love matches made up on the trip, and has taken the happy couple their honeymoon excursion in the following year.

Asked as to the character of the company usually availing itself of his tickets, my agent responded shortly, “first-rate ;” but, on its being explained to him that the social status rather than the moral character of his excursionists is what is inquired after, he became more communicative. The destination of the excursion, he explained,

greatly determined its numbers and the social classes from which it was made up. The trips to Edinburgh, and the shorter excursions in England, attract tradesmen and their wives ; merchants' clerks away for a week's holiday, roughing it with a knapsack, and getting over an immense number of miles before they return ; swart mechanics, who seem never to be able entirely to free themselves from traces of their life-long labour, but who, my agent tells me, are by no means the worst informed, and are generally the most interested about the places they visit. In the return trips from Scotland to England come many students of the schools and universities ; raw-boned, hard-worked youths, who, in defiance of the popular belief, actually do return to their native country for a time, probably to make a future raid into and settlement in the land whose nakedness they had spied into in early youth. As to Swiss excursions, the company is of a very different order ; the Whitsuntide trip has a good deal of the cockney element in it, and is mostly composed of very high-spirited people, whose greatest delight in life is "having a fling," and who do Paris, and rush through France, and through Switzerland to Chamounix, compare every place they are taken to with the views which formed part of the exhibition at the Egyptian Hall, carry London everywhere about with them in dress, habits, and conversation, and rush back, convinced that they are great travellers. From these roisterers the July and September excursionists differ greatly : ushers and governesses, practical people from the provinces, and representatives of the better style of the London mercantile community who form their component parts ; all travel as if impressed with the notion that they are engaged in fulfilling the wishes of a lifetime, in a pleasant duty never to be repeated. They stop at all the principal towns, visiting all the curiosities to be seen in them, and are full of discussion among themselves, proving that they are nearly all thoroughly well up in the subject. Many of

them carry books of reference with them, and nearly all take notes.

I inquired whether my agent always accompanied his flock, or whether he occasionally permitted them to wander alone. He told me that on the Swiss trips he made a point of being with them from the starting-place to the destination, and that he never considered himself free from responsibility—though of course there could be no kind of claim on him—until they were all landed in England. He should pursue this course on the Italian and all Continental excursions; but in England he frequently did not meet his tourists until their arrival at the first large provincial town on their route, when he “turned up promiscuously as it were.” I asked him what was gained by remaining with the large body, and not rambling away by oneself. When, in reply, my agent hinted that his society and guidance were the advantages in question, he looked at me so sternly that I determined to press him with no further questions of that nature.

In the Exhibition years of '51 and '62, my agent, for the first time since 1846, had no Scotch tourist trips, being engaged by the Midland Railway Company as manager of their Exhibition excursion trains, in which capacity he supervised the conveyance to London of above a hundred and fifty thousand persons; and in those years my agent commenced business in another line. The excursionists, once landed in London, wanted somewhere to live in, and, with the usual caution of country people, distrusted the touters and advertisements greeting them on every side. Regarding this feature in the first batch which he brought up, my agent immediately engaged six private family houses “furnished for the season,” as boarding-houses for the richer members of his flock, who, for six shillings and six-pence a day each, were provided with bed, breakfast, and a meat-tea. For the working people he took a block of new

houses, two hundred model cottages of two or three rooms each, in the neighbourhood of Fulham, furnished them at a cost of about a thousand pounds, and charged their occupants half-a-crown a day each for bed, breakfast, and tea ; dinners were not provided. About twelve thousand persons were lodged here during the season ; among them three delegations of skilled workmen from Paris, fifty in number, one delegation of fifty from Turin, and two of forty each from Germany. Mr. Foster, the member for Bradford, also brought up five hundred and forty of his workpeople for a three days' treat, and lodged them with my agent. Several of the railway companies recommended my agent's lodgings on their excursion-bills—a concession never before made.

Although my agent is perfectly amiable on all other subjects, I find one topic on which he is absolutely ferocious, and that is the supposed danger of excursion trains. Obviously he has expected me to touch upon this point, for I no sooner utter the words, "How about the danger?" than he stops me by holding up one hand, while with the other he produces a written paper, which he delivers to me and begs me to "cast an eye over." Casting two eyes over it, I find it to be a tabular statement, showing that in the thirteen years between 1851 and 1863, both inclusive, the Midland Railway Company conveyed two millions six hundred and seventy-six thousand six hundred and eighty-eight passengers by excursion trains, being an average of two hundred and five thousand nine hundred a year. My agent further informed me that the only serious accident which ever happened to an excursion train on the Midland Railway was in 1862 at Market Harborough, when one life was lost and several passengers seriously injured. This accident cost the company eighteen thousand pounds in compensations, law expenses, loss of property, etc. To insure the safety of these excursion trains special arrangements are made, the best guards are appointed to conduct them, and

in every case an experienced inspecting guard accompanies the train to see that all the others do their duty. A programme of excursion trains all over the line is published weekly, a copy being supplied to every station-master, guard, or other responsible officer ; besides which, special notices are supplied to all pointsmen and other stationary servants, in anticipation of the coming of the trains. In defence of his system, my agent also urged that all great public demonstrations were encouraged and aided by excursion trains ; and that societies for the promotion of religious, social, and philanthropic objects were often indebted to the railway companies for the crowds brought together to attend them, and in many cases for pecuniary aid, in the shape of percentage on the earnings ; that excursion and tourist arrangements constituted the chief support of many watering-places ; whilst the benefits derived by the humbler classes is entirely dependent on such arrangements ; and that the visits paid by large numbers of excursionists to Chatsworth, and other great houses thrown open to them by their rich owners, did an immense amount of social good, and gave rise to the growth of pleasant feeling between the benefited and the benefactors.

It was in 1855 that my agent, longing like Alexander for fresh worlds to conquer, bethought him that the Paris Exhibition, then being held, would probably prove attractive to excursionists ; and thither he organised a trip, which provided for a visit to Paris, thence proceeded through France to Strasburg, and returned home down the Rhine. So successful was this experiment, that ever since he has repeated it annually ; but, as he expressed himself, he “was never able to feel his way” to Switzerland till 1863, when, in person, he conducted three parties (one of them three hundred strong) from England to Geneva. My agent’s tickets for an excursion from London to Geneva cost, first-class six guineas, second-class four pounds twelve shillings and six-

pence ; they are available for twenty-eight days, and allow of the journey being broken at Rouen, Paris, Fontainebleau, Dijon, Maçon, and all the principal towns in Switzerland. Supplemental tickets are issued in Switzerland at twenty per cent. under the usual prices, and nearly all the excursionists visit Chamounix. There are three regular Swiss trips in the course of the year : one at Whitsuntide ("Not a good time," said my agent, in reply to my elevated eyebrows, "but it is merely an extension of my annual excursion to Paris") ; one in the first week of July—the largest and best, principally on account of its being vacation-time in the schools, and my agent's excursion being much favoured by ushers and governesses ; and one in September. On all these occasions my agent takes charge of and acts as guide, philosopher, and friend to the party. I suggested that his knowledge of foreign languages must be severely taxed. Then he smiled, and told me that was provided for by his knowing nothing but English ; but that mattered little, as there was always one of his party at his elbow to explain what he suggested. His hotel arrangements are all made beforehand ; in every principal town in Switzerland he has one regular hotel, with fixed prices, eight to nine francs a day for everything, attendance included. "And the best hotels too, mind you," said he emphatically, "the best hotels—such as the Royal at Chamounix."

Emboldened by his success, my agent confided to me his idea of, during the following summer, enabling English excursionists to see for themselves what it is that the Romans really do, and which we are all expected to emulate while we are temporary denizens of the Eternal City. In plain words, he purposed taking two special parties to Italy, one in July and one in September, over one of the Alpine passes, Mont Cenis, St. Gothard, or the Splügen, through the Lake district, to Como and Milan, with the option of running on to Turin, Florence, Venice, and Rome itself ! He is led to

expect a very large concession from the Italian railways, and has his plans pretty nearly matured.*

Now surely this kind of thing is a good kind of thing, and ought to be encouraged. It is right that a hard-working man, labouring in one spot for fifty weeks in the year, should, in his fortnight's holiday, betake himself to some place as far away from and as different from his ordinary abode as lies within the reach of his purse ; and this he is only able to do by the aid of such providers as my excursion agent. And each year should, if possible, be spent in a different locality. Ramsgate and Margate are good, fresh, and wholesome ; and Southend, though it would be improved if its pier were a little shorter, and its water a little salter, is good too ; but as even perpetual partridge palled upon the epicure, so does a constant recurrence to one sea-side place pall upon the holiday-seeker. In the excursion-train he can fly to fresh fields and new pastures ; he can see the glorious English cathedrals, the gray Highlands, the quaint Belgian cities, the castled Rhine crags, the glaciers, mountains, and waterfalls of Switzerland, and perhaps the blue plains of Italy, for comparatively a very trifling sum ; and these seen, he will return with a fresh zest for his home and for his work, and a fresh appreciation for all that is beautiful in nature or great in history.

If these then be, as I fancy they are, some of the results of the work of my excursion agent—work in itself requiring clearness of intellect, and honesty and stability of purpose—I think I have a right to claim for him a position, modest but useful, in that great army of civilisation which is marching through the world.

* This excursion was made with very great success. A friend of mine, well known in journalism, was one of the party, and has in an amusing article chronicled his thorough approval of Mr. Cook's arrangements.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOLDING UP THE MIRROR.

IF the writer of these presents prides himself upon one point—and he is afraid he prides himself upon a good many—it is on his possessing an extraordinary stock of theatrical information. This stock is derived entirely from a weekly paper which is dropped down his area every Sunday morning, and the perusal of which is one of his greatest enjoyments. This journal,* well connected and highly respectable, is the chronicle of the theatrical, musical, and “entertaining” world; its columns teem with advertisements from professionals of every description; from it the manager learns what talent is disengaged, the actor what situations are vacant, the author where his pieces are being played, and to whom he is to look for remuneration; it contains a synopsis of all the theatrical performances in this country, and American hints as to new pieces which are coming out across the Atlantic; it gives profuse and erudite criticisms on those which have been recently played; it supports in vigorous language all dramatic charities and institutions; it attacks in fiery terms any short-sceing stiff-necked bigotry—in a word, it is the actor’s hebdomadal monitor and friend.

But woe be to you, oh general public, if (not being

* *The Era.*

theatrical) you take refuge in the excellent newspaper that has enlightened the writer, and purpose therewith solacing the tedium of your journey to Bolton-le-Moors or Stow-on-the-Wold. How can you grasp the fact that there are at present wanted at the Belvidere Rooms, Seagate, "Heavy Leading Gentleman, Juvenile Leading ditto, Second Low Comedy to combine Singing, Heavy Leading Lady to combine First Old Woman; also few good Ability Ladies and Gentlemen?" What do you make of the announcement that "a couple of first-rate funny niggers may write?" What is your notion of a "window-distributor who can insure a large display?" Would anything puzzle you more than to find "tenants for the Rifle Gallery, Hermit's Cave, Fancy Bazaar, Tea and Coffee Stands, and Confectionary Bar at the Peckham Paradise;" unless it were to discover that you had suddenly obtained the appointment of "stunning, first-rate, go-ahead agent in advance" to the "Lancashire clog-dancer and dulcimer-player, and the comic gentleman (Irish)?" You have to dispose of no paintings on glass of the best description, suitable for a pair of lanterns with three-and-a-half-inch condensers, to use with oxy-calamic and oil lights ; you could make but little use of the fighting-tiger, the property of the late King of Oude, and Champion of the Arena ; you would stand no higher in the estimation of your serious aunt at Clapham, from whom you have expectations, even though you were to appear at Ebenezer Villa in company with Mr. and Mrs. Jacopo Bligh, the celebrated duologue ducttists ; neither would your Angelina love you more dearly were you to have "pegtop whiskers," or even the "real imperceptible shape," which is not to be equalled at the price. Worse than Greek, Hebrew, Double-Dutch, or that mysterious language passing under the title of Abracadabra, would be these advertisements to you. But the writer was cradled in a property washing basket, was nursed by a clown, was schooled at Dr. Birchem's establish-

ment for young gentlemen (Scene 3d: Usher, Mr. Whackem-hard ; scholars, Masters Sleepy, Dozy, Yawn, Sluggard, and Snore ; Dunce, Master Foolscap), and has since graduated in the university of the great theatrical newspaper.

An advertisement in bold type, at the top of the second column of the paper, runs thus : “ DACRE PONTIFEX.—This popular tragedian appears at Frome, Glastonbury, Yeovil, Lyme Regis, and at Bridport, on the 25th of April. Managers wishing to secure the services of this celebrated *artiste* are requested to apply to the theatrical agent, Mr. Trapman, Rouge Street, Blanco Square.” Ah ! a very few years ago and the inhabitants of Frome and Glastonbury might as well have wished for a sight of the extinct dodo as of Dacre Pontifex ! Managers of the first London theatres fought for him ; it was whispered that marchionesses were dying in love for him ; to be seen in his company was an honour even for the most radiant gentleman in the crackest of the crack regiments. Dacre Pontifex had been but a short time in London when he attracted the notice of Mr. Bellows, the great tragedian, then about to start on his American tour. Mr. Bellows took Pontifex with him, taught him, polished him, and turned him into a master of his art. When he returned to England, one of those fits of Shakespearian enthusiasm which periodically seize upon the town had just begun to terminate ; newspapers were referring to the Bard and the Swan, and several gentlemen were lashing themselves into a state of fury touching the immoralities of the French stage, and the triumphs of vice. Wuff was the manager of the T. R. Hatton Garden at that time, and Wuff was a man of the age. He knew when Pontifex was to return, and no sooner had the fast-sailing Cunard packet *Basin* been descried off Liverpool, than Wuff and the pilot were on board together ; and in the course of half-an-hour a document duly signed by Pontifex was in Wuff’s pocket. “ I’ll bill you in letters three feet long, my boy, on every

dead wall in town ; and please the pigs, we'll resuscitate the British drayma, and put Billy on his legs again !”

Shakespeare, thus familiarly spoken of by Mr. Wuff as Billy, proved once more the powers of his attraction, and the success of the new actor was beyond all question. Whether he raved in Hamlet, languished in Romeo, stormed in Othello, or joked in Benedick, he invariably drew tremendous houses, and received overwhelming applause. His portrait was in the illustrated journals, and in chromo lithographic colours on the title-page of the Pontifex Waltz (dedicated to him by his humble admirer Sebastian Bach Faggles, chef d'orchestre, T. R. Hatton Garden). Old Silas Bulgrubber, the stage-doorkeeper, grumbled furiously at the number of applications for Mr. Pontifex, and at the shower of delicately-tinted notes for that gentleman which were perpetually pouring into Silas's dingy box. The odour of the patchouli and sandal-wood essences from these notes actually prevailed over the steam of the preparation of onions and mutton which was always brought in a yellow basin to Silas at twelve o'clock, and which made the porter's habitation smell like a curious combination of a hairdresser's and a cook-shop. Wuff, the impresario, as in those days the favourite journal not unfrequently designated him, was in ecstasies ; his celebrated red-velvet waistcoat was creased with constant bowings to the aristocracy of the land. He gave a magnificent dinner to Pontifex at Greenwich, at which was present a large and miscellaneous company, including the Marquis of Groovington, who had married Miss Cholmeleigh, late of the T. R. H. G. ; Sir Charles Fakeaway; Four-in-hand Farquhar, of the Royal Rhinoceros Guards, Mauve ; Captain Kooleese, Tommy Tosh, well known at the clubs ; Mr. Tapgrove, the dramatic author ; Mr. Replevin, Q.C., the Star of the Old Bailey, and Honorary Counsel to the Society of Distressed Scene-shifters ; Mr. Flote, the stage-manager ; Slogger, Champion of the

Middle Weights ; Signor Drumsi Polstoodoff, the Egyptian Fire-annihilator ; and many others. The banquet cost Wuff a hundred pounds, caused the consumption of an immense quantity of wine, and ended in the Fire-annihilator's springing into the middle of the table, kicking the decanters on to the floor, and in a strong Irish accent requesting any gentleman present to tread on the tail of his coat.

From this Greenwich dinner may be dated the beginning of Pontifex's extremely bad end. That little dare-devil, Tommy Tosh, and that fastest of fast men, Four-in-hand Farquhar, who were first introduced to Pontifex at the Wuffian banquet, no sooner made his acquaintance, than they showed themselves perfectly enraptured with his company. They pervaded the dressing-room which he shared with Mr. Deadwate, the low comedian, and "stood" brandy-and-water to that eminent buffo ; they waited for Pontifex at the close of the performance, and took him away to Haymarket orgies, to private suppers, to where the frequenters of the Little Nick worshipped their divinity with closed doors and on a green-baize-covered altar, and to every scene of dissipation which the town could boast—or not boast—of. One sultry day in July, when Wuff was thinking of speedily closing the T. R. H. G., and transporting all his company to some seaside watering-place for the combined benefit of their health and his pocket, Mr. Flote tapped at the door of the managerial sanctum, and entering, informed his chief, that though the orchestra was already "rung in," Mr. Pontifex, who was to appear in the first scene, had not arrived at the theatre. The overture was played and twice repeated, and during the third time of its repetition Pontifex arrived. Mr. Flote, who had been watching for him at the stage-door, turned ghastly pale when he saw him, and followed him anxiously to his dressing-room, then descended to the wing, and waited until he should appear. The British public, which had grown irate at being kept waiting, and

which had treated with the utmost scorn the explanation which Mr. Slyme, the “apologist” of the theatre, had offered for the delay, was now softened and soothed by the expectation of their favourite’s appearance ; and when the cue which immediately preceded his entrance was given, those acquainted with the play commenced an applause which swelled into a tumultuous roar of delight. The effect of this ovation upon its recipient was very singular ; he started back, covered his head with his hand, and staggered to a chair, into which he fell. The applause ceased on the instant, and in the sudden lull Mr. Flote’s voice was heard urging somebody “for Heaven’s sake to rouse himself.” Mr. Pontifex then rose from the chair, balanced himself for a few seconds on his heels, looked gravely at the audience, informed them in a high-pitched key that he was “all right,” and fell flat on his back. In vain did Mr. Slyme, Mr. Flote, and even the great Wuff himself—that theatrical Mokanna who was never unveiled to the public save to receive their compliments upon his transformation-scene on Boxing-nights—appear before the baize and appeal to the audience. It would not brook Mr. Dacre Pontifex any longer ; and hence we find his advertisement in the favourite journal, and his intention to visit the lively localities already set forth.

What next, among the advertisements in the favourite journal? “TO BE LET, with extensive cellarage attached, suitable for a wine-merchant, the CRACKSIDEUM THEATRE ROYAL. Apply at the stage-door.” The Cracksideum to let again ! That old theatre has seen some strange vicissitudes. Once, it was taken by Mr. Stolberg Stentor, a country tragedian of enormous powers of lung, who had roared his way to the highest point of theatrical felicity in the Bradford and Sheffield regions, and who only wanted an opening in London to be acknowledged as the head of the theatrical profession. A good round sum of money,

honestly earned by hard work in the provinces, did Mr. Stentor bring with him to London, and the old Cracksideum looked bravely in the new paint and gilding which he bestowed upon it. A good man, Mr. Stentor, an energetic, bustling, never-tiring actor, a little too self-reliant perhaps, playing all the principal characters himself, and supporting himself by an indifferent company, but still a man who meant to do something, and who did it. What he did was to get through his two thousand pounds in an inconceivably short space of time. The public rather liked him at first, then bore him patiently, then tolerated him impatiently, then forsook him altogether. Stentor as Hamlet in the inky cloak, Stentor as Richard in the velvet ermine, Stentor as the Stranger in the Hessian boots, Stentor as Claude Melnotte, Stentor as the Lonely Lion of the Ocean, Stentor as Everybody in Everything, grew to be a bore, and was left alone in his glory. Still he never gave in ; he received visitors sitting in his chair of state ; after the first word he never glanced at a visitor, but continued practising the celebrated Stentor scowl and Stentor eye business in the mirror ; he kept the carpenters at a respectful tragic distance ; he awed the little ballet-girls with the great Stentor stride ; and he remained monarch of all he surveyed, until he played his last great part of Stentor in the Insolvent Court, the minor characters being sustained by one Mr. Commissioner, and some "supers" named Sargood and Linklater. His appearance here was so great a success that his audience requested to see him again in six months' time.

An Italian, the Favourite Prestidigitateur of his Majesty the King of the Leeboo Islands ; Mr. Lens's Starry Carpet, or the Heavens at a Glance ; the Female Wilberforcists, or Emancipated Darky Serenaders ; and Mr. Michael O'Hone, the celebrated Hibernian orator—succeeded each other rapidly at the Cracksideum, and, after a few nights' performance, vanished, leaving no trace behind, save in their

unpaid gas-bills. One morning, mankind read in the favourite journal that the house had been taken, and would shortly be opened by Mr. Frank Likely, with the assistance of a talented company. I walked down to the theatre to satisfy myself, and saw in a minute that the announcement was true. A chaos reigned in the interior of the old theatre ; all the worm-eaten pit-benches, under which the rats had so often enjoyed a healthy supper of sandwich-fragments and orange-peel, were piled up in a heap in a corner of the outside yard ; stalls covered with Utrecht red velvet were being screwed down in their place ; Leather Lane had emptied itself of mirrors, which paper-capped men were fixing all along the passages ; one set of bricklayers were tearing to pieces the old dwelling-house, another was building the portico ; pendent from the roof, and straddling across planks supported by flimsy ropes, sat deep-voiced Germans, decorating the ceiling in alternate layers of blue and gold, and issuing guttural mandates to assistants hidden in the dome ; carpenters were enlarging the private boxes ; scene-painters were looking over the old scenes ; and, in the midst of all the confusion, stood Mr. Frank Likely himself, dressed in a dark-blue frock-coat, with a camellia of price in the button-hole, lavender trousers, amber-coloured gloves, and smoking a choice cigar as he superintended the preparations. Under the Likely management, the Cracksideum was something like a theatre ; none of your low melodramas or funny farces, but choice little vaudevilles, torn up like drakes with shrieking roots from the Boulevards, and transplanted all a-blowing to the Strand ; comediettas of the utmost gentility, and burlesques teeming with wit and fancy, and giving opportunities for the display of the series of magnificent legs belonging to a picked *corps de ballet*, and to such brilliancy of scenery as only the great genius of the accomplished Scumble could invent and execute. Filling the house were the great names in which the fashionable world rejoices—

princes of the blood, blue ribbons, and gold cordons, heavies of the household troops, wicked wits, old gentlemen living with and on young gentlemen, a few lovely ladies with very brilliant eyes and pearly complexions—but the audience principally of the male sex, and generally to be described as loose. Behind the curtain, and filling the elegantly-appointed green-room, the literary staff of the theatre ; Horsely Collaridge, the young burlesque writer, ragged, hoarse, dirty, and defiant ; Smirke, the veteran dramatist, serene, calm, and polished from the top of his bald head to the sole of his evening boots ; Lovibond and Spatter, critics who dined on an average three times a week with Likely, and spent the remainder of the evening receiving theatrical homage ; little Dr. Larynx, medico in ordinary to the profession, and a sprinkling of the aristocracy, who had panted for his distinction ever since they left Eton, but who, having achieved it, found themselves not quite so happy as they had anticipated. Grand days, glorious days, but not calculated to last ; the entertainment was soon found to be of too light and airy a description for the old audiences of the Cracksideum, and the new audiences ran into debt at the librarian's for their stalls and boxes, and very little ready money found its way into the pockets of the management. Nevertheless, Mrs. Frank Likely still kept up her gorgeous bouquets, still put on two new pairs of lavender gloves per diem, and still kept up her Sunday-evening parties at that cottage on Wimbledon Common, which was the envy of the civilised world ; likewise, Mr. Frank Likely still betted highly, smoked the best Havannahs, dressed in the best taste, and drove in his curriicle the highest-stepping pair of grays in London. But Black Care soon took up her position in the back seat of the curriicle behind the high-stepping grays ; gentlemen of Hebraic countenance were frequent in their inquiries for Mr. Likely ; little Mr. Leopop, of Thavies Inn, had a perpetual retainer for the defence ; the manager darted from

his brougham to the stage-door through a double line of stalwart carpenters, who sedulously elbowed and kept back any evil-looking personages ; and finally Mr. Likely, after playing a highly-eccentric comic character, with a bailiff waiting at each wing, and one posted underneath the stage to guard against any escape by means of trap-door, was carried from his dressing-room to a cart in the hollow of the big drum ; and the advertisement just quoted appeared in the favourite journal, announcing the Cracksideum as again To Let.

“Wanted, for an entertainment, a professional gentleman, of versatile powers, age not over thirty. Characters to be sustained : a Young and an Elderly Gentleman, a Modern Fop, a Frenchman, and a Drunken Character in Low Life.” Can I not check-off on my fingers twenty gentlemen who could undertake this responsibility ? Young Gentleman: blue coat, wrinkled white trousers, stuffed and grimy at the knees, Gibus hat, and brown Berlin gloves ; carries an ebony cane with a silver top, and smacks therewith his leg approvingly ; talks of his club and his tiger ; of Julia and his adoration for her, sings a ballad to her beauty, and regards her father as an “Old Hunks.” Elderly Gentleman—“Old Hunks,” aforesaid: hat with a curled brim, iron-gray wig, with the line where it joins the forehead painfully apparent, large shirt-frill, Marsala waistcoat, blue coat with brass buttons, nankeen pantaloons fitting tight to the ankle, ribbed stockings with buckle, thick stick with crutch-handle ; very rich, very gouty, loves his stomach, hates young gentlemen, speaks of everybody as a “jackanapes,” is unpleasantly amorous towards lady’s-maid, whom he pokes in ribs with stick, and carries all his wealth (which is invariably in notes, to “double the amount” of any named sum) in a fat pocket-book, which he bestows as a reward to virtue at the finale. Modern Fop: brown coat with basket buttons, enormous peg-top trousers, whiskers

and moustache, eyeglass—which is his stronghold in life—says nothing but “ah!” and “paw-sitive-ly damme!” except words abounding in the letter “r,” which he pronounces as “w.” Of the Drunken Character in Low Life it is unnecessary to speak: a depressed eyelid, a hiccuping voice, and staggering legs, and there is the “drunken character” complete. The professional gentleman of versatile powers, who places himself in communication with the proprietor of the entertainment, will probably find himself expected to purchase the manuscript, dresses, and properties appertaining thereto, and to start entirely on his own account. He is not unlikely to agree to this. He has been for some time out of employment, and when last engaged at Stow-in-the-Wold he had to play Horatio, when everyone knows that Laertes is his right line of business. He thinks it a good opportunity, too, to let the managers see what stuff he has got in him. And then he has a wife, a pale-faced consumptive woman who can play the piano and accompany his songs; and so, finally, he invests the remnant of his savings, or borrows money from his wife’s family, who are in the serious bookbinding interest, and who look upon him with horror, not unmixed with fear, and commences his tour. Oh! on what dreary journeys does the “Portfolio,” or the “Odds and Ends,” or whatever the poor little show is called, then go! To what museums and literary institutes, where the green damp is pealing off the stucco, where the green baize-covering is fraying off the seats in the “lecture-hall,” where there are traces of the chemical professor who held forth on Acids and Alkalies last week, in pungent-smelling phials and the top of a spirit-lamp; and where the pencil memorandum on the white-washed wall of the ante-chamber, “coffee, baby, spurs, watch, umbrella, rabbits,” with a mark against each item, is evidently attributable to the conjurer who gave such satisfaction the week before last, and was so particular as to

his properties ! In dull gaunt “assembly-rooms” of country old-fashioned inns, where the unaccustomed gas winks and whistles in the heavy chandelier, and where the proscenium is formed by an antiquated leather screen, which has been dragged from the coffee-room, where for countless years it has veiled the cruet-mixings of the waiter from vulgar eyes ; where the clergyman who sits in the front row feels uncomfortable about the “modern fop,” as tacitly reflecting upon the eldest son of the lord of the manor ; and where the landlord and the tapster, who keep the door a few inches ajar, and are perpetually running to look, when there is no one in the bar, declare the “drunken character in low life” to be out-and-out, and no mistake. Poor little show, whose yellow announce-bills are handed-in with such cringing courtesy at the shops of the principal tradesmen, and are seen fluttering in damp strips, weeks afterwards, on all posts and available palings. Poor little show !

The Music-Halls are only of recent introduction among the amusements of London, but their advertisements occupy at least one-half of the front page of the journal. Here they are : the Belshazzar Saloon and Music-Hall, Hollin’s Magnificent New Music-Hall, the Lord Somerset Music-Hall, and half a score of others ; to say nothing of the old-established house, Llewellyn’s, where there are suppers for gentlemen after the theatres. Magnificent places are these halls, radiant and gay as those in which the lady dreamt she dwelt, miracles of gilding and plate-glass and fresco-painting, doing a roaring trade—which they deserve, for the entertainment given in them is generally good, and always free from offence. These are the homes of the renowned tenors, the funny Irishmen, the real Irish boys, the Tipperary lads (genuine), the delineators of Scotch character, the illustrators of Robert Burns, the Sisters Johnson the world-celebrated duologue duettists, the sentimental vocalists, the talented sopranis, the triumphant Bodger family (three in

number), and the serio-comic wonder, “ who is at liberty to engage for one turn.” It is curious to observe how completely monopoly has been overset at these places ; no sooner does a gentleman achieve success at one place than he is instantly engaged at all the others, rushing from one to the other as fast as his brougham can take him, singing the same song in different parts of the metropolis seven or eight times during the evening, and making a flourishing income.

Change of manners has done away with the theatrical tavern which flourished twenty years ago, with its portraits of theatrical notabilities round its walls, and its theatrical notabilities themselves sitting in its boxes ; where leading tragedians and comedians of intense comic power would sit together discussing past and present theatrical times, while theatrical patrons of the humbler order looked on in silent delight, and theatrical critics were penning their lucubrations in neighbouring boxes. Famous wits and men of learning clustered round the dark-stained tables of the Rougepot in Playhouse Court, and half the anecdotes and good sayings which have saved an otherwise dull book, and made many a dull man’s reputation, first saw gaslight beneath its winking cressets. But we have changed all that. The famous wits are dead, and the men of the new generation know not the Rougepot ; the theatrical critics go away to their newspaper-office to write, the actors’ broughams are in waiting after the performance to bear away their owners to suburban villas, and the old tavern is shut up. Still, however, exists the theatrical coffee-house, with its fly-blown play-bills hanging over the wire blind ; its greasy coffee-stained lithograph of Signor Polasco, the celebrated clown, with his performing dogs ; and its blue-stencilled announcement of Mr. Trapman’s Dramatic Agency Office upstairs. Still do Mr. Trapman’s clients hang about his doors ; old men in seedy camlet cloaks, with red noses and bleared eyes ;

dark sunken-eyed young men, with cheeks so blue from constant close-shaving, that they look as though they were stained with woad ; down Mr. Trapman's stairs, on autumn evenings, troop portly matrons who have passed almost their entire life upon the stage, and who, at five years of age made their first appearance as flying fairies ; sharp, wizen-faced little old ladies, who can still "make-up young," and are on the look-out for singing-chambermaids' situations ; heavy tragedians with books full of testimonials extracted from the pungent criticism of provincial journals ; low-comedy men, whose own laughter, to judge from their appearance, must, for some period, have been of that description known as "on the wrong side of the mouth." There you may see them all day long, lounging in Rouge Street, leaning against posts, amicably fencing with their ashen-sticks, gazing at the play-bills of the metropolitan theatres, and wondering when their names will appear there.

One more advertisement, and I have finished. "To Barristers, Clergymen, and Public Speakers.—Mr. Cicero Lumph, Professor of Elocution, Principal Orator at the various universities, and for upwards of thirty years connected with the principal London theatres, begs to represent that he is prepared to give instruction in public speaking by a method at once easy and efficacious, and that he can point with pride to some of the first orators of the day as his pupils. N.B.—Stammering effectually cured." Many years ago, Cicero Lumph was a dashing captain of dragoons, with a handsome face, a fine figure, and splendid expectations from an old aunt who adored him. His craze was theatrical society, and he was at home in every greenroom, called all actors and actresses by their Christian names, and spent his money liberally upon them. The old aunt did not object to this ; she rather liked it, and used to revel in her nephew's stories of those "humorous people, the performers." But when the captain so far forgot what was due

to himself and his station as to enter into an alliance with one of these humorists (he married Bessie Fowke, a meek little *cryptphœ* of the Hatton Garden ballet), the old lady's rage was terrific ; and she only had time to alter her will and to leave all her property to a Charitable Society, before her rage brought on a fit of apoplexy and she expired. Poor Lumpf, finding all supplies thus summarily cut off, was compelled to resign his commission, and of course took to the stage ; but the stage did not take to him, and he failed ; then he became secretary to Mr. Tatterer, the great tragedian, wrote all his letters, made all his engagements, and (some said) prepared all the newspaper criticisms which appeared on that eminent man. When Tatterer came up to London and took the Pantechnicon Theatre—where the early Athenian drama was revived at such an enormous expense, and with so much success—Lumph became his treasurer and continued his toady ; and when Tatterer died in the heyday of his triumph, Lumpf found that he had netted a considerable sum of money, and that he could pass the remainder of his life without any very hard exertion ; so he became an instructor in elocution. He is an old man now, with a small wig perched on the top of his head, bushy eyebrows overhanging little gray eyes, and a large cavernous mouth, with three or four teeth sticking upright and apart in the gums, like rocks. His body is bloated and his legs are shrivelled ; but he has still the grand old Tatterer stride, the Tatterer intonation of the voice, the Tatterer elevation of the brow, the Tatterer swing of the arm—all imitated from his great master. He lives in a handsome old-fashioned house in Hotspur Street, Douglas Square, and his knocker all day long is besieged with candidates for instruction. Thither come blushing young curates, who have stammered along well enough in the country parishes to which they were originally licensed, but who, having obtained preferment, think they must be polished up for the London or watering-

place congregation which they are to have in care ; thither come stout members of Parliament, big with intentions of catching the speaker's eye, but doubtful of their powers of elocution when they have ensnared that visual organ ; thither come amateur Othellos, Falstaffs, and Sir Peter Teazles, who are about to delight their friends with private theatricals ; and the door is often blockaded by stout vestrymen or obnoxious churchwardens, anxious to show bravely in a forthcoming tourney in some parochial parliament. There, in a large drawing-room do they mount an oaken rostrum, and thunder forth the orations of Sheridan and Burke and Curran ; there does the sofa-bolster become the dead body of Cæsar, and over it do they inform Lumpf, who is sitting by and critically listening, that they are no orator as Brutus is.

I could go on for pages upon pages about my favourite journal and those whose interests it supports ; but no more shall be said than this : Deal gently with these poor players. That they are the “chronicles and abstract of the time” now, whatever they were in Shakespeare's day, I cannot pretend; for perhaps among no other set of human creatures will so pure and thorough a system of conventionality, handed down from generation to generation, be found to exist ; but they are almost universally honest, kindly, hard-working, self-supporting, and uncomplaining. And in no other class will you find more zeal, gentle-heartedness, and genuine philanthropy than among those whose life is passed in Holding up the Mirror.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM MOODY AND CO.

WHAT Englishman, possessing any share of the national vanity, or any proper self-respect, would declare his ignorance respecting the manners and customs of the hunting-field, and the inner life of that grandest of British field-sports, fox-hunting? We all knew Tom Moody, the whipper-in, well, of course! We know about bright Chanticleer proclaiming the morn, and old Towler joining the cry, and the southerly wind and the cloudy sky, and the

Hey, ho, chivy !
Hark forward ! hark forward ! tanti-vy !

with very quick enunciation and very high upper note, and all the rest of it. We know Fores's hunting-sketches, and those admirable woodcuts of Mr. John Leech's, where the "swells" are always flying their fences, and the "snobs" are always coming to grief; where the pretty girls, whom no one else has ever so charmingly portrayed, are rushing at bulfinches; while those glorious boys, whom no one else has ever attempted, are running their Shetlands at raspers. There is a popular style of literature now, the hero of which is always an athletic horsey man; and, notwithstanding his weight, making it a point to be up with the first flight throughout the run, generally winning the heiress and the Great Polodoxy Steeple-chase at one and the same time;

or reproaching the young lady, who has jilted him for a richer suitor, by taking some terrific and horribly-dangerous leap in the very teeth of the pony she has driven in a low wicker-carriage to the meet. Thanks in some measure to the convenience of railways, there are probably but few of us with a sporting turn who have not been out with the Queen's stag-hounds, the Surrey fox-hounds ; or who have not, while staying at Brighton, enjoyed a day's sport under the generalship of that glorious specimen of the English yeoman who hunts the Brookside harriers. But notwithstanding all these experiences, I have an idea that very few persons, even those who take great interest in such matters, have any notion of the enormous expense and trouble consequent on the management of a pack of hounds ; and it is for the benefit of those who are thus ignorant, and who may be glad of having the whole information in a handy shape, and in a small compass, without the trouble of reference to encyclopædias or heavy statistical works, that these observations, derived first-hand from two of the first masters of hounds in England, and carefully compared with standard authorities, are written.

And first, of the hounds. The number of couple in a pack of fox-hounds depends on how many days in a week the pack is hunted. If twice a week (or with an occasional extra day, called a "bye-day"), twenty-five couple will be sufficient ; for three days a week, thirty-five couple ; and for four days a week, forty-five couple will be required. The prices of hounds vary according to demand and supply. Draft-hounds, *i.e.* such as have been selected for steadiness and scenting powers, generally average three guineas a couple ; but the safest plan for an intending master of hounds is to consult the advertising-columns of sporting journals, and see whether any well-known and established packs are for sale. At the present time of writing* there is

but one pack in the market, and for them is asked thirteen guineas a couple. Three or four hundred guineas is a common price, and one is not likely to get anything very special for the money ; but a good pack has now and then gone cheap, and been picked up for five hundred pounds. No man with any sporting nous would refuse to give a thousand guineas for a pack of hounds with a thoroughly-established reputation. Much larger prices are on record. From Mr. Blaine we learn that in 1826 Mr. Warde, a well-known sportsman, sold his pack for two thousand guineas ; while in more recent times Mr. Foljambe's hounds, sold by auction in lots at Tattersall's, realised three thousand six hundred pounds—one lot of five couple fetching three hundred and eighty guineas, and another of four couple and a half, four hundred and eighty guineas. Here is your preliminary expense.

Having provided your pack, you will, of course, have prepared your kennel for them, which will not be a small item in your outlay. As you can expend fifteen shillings or five hundred pounds on a dressing-case, according to the style of article you require, so will the cost of the erection of your kennel depend entirely on your taste and the contents of your purse. The Duke of Richmond's kennel cost ten thousand pounds. The Duke of Bedford's is four hundred and fifty feet in length. You will probably be satisfied with something less magnificent than either of these ; but there are, nevertheless, certain necessaries which it is incumbent on a kennel-builder to provide. Among these are a boiling-house for the meat, lodging-rooms for the hounds, a grass or gravel court into which to turn the dogs while the lodging-rooms are being aired, a plentiful supply of good water, and a lodging-room for either your huntsman, whipper-in, or kennel-attendant, who must be so close to the hounds that, should any quarrelling take place, they can hear his voice, or the crack of his whip, or

the sound of a bell, which he could pull, and which should hang over where the dogs sleep. Hounds are very savage in kennel ; and after a fight in which a dog has been killed, his body is sometimes devoured by the rest. Old sportsmen have an anecdote, too, of a whipper-in being torn to pieces on going into the kennel at night in his shirt, in which dress the hounds did not recognise him, and without first calling to them. The best food for hounds is oatmeal and horse-flesh, boiled ; vegetables, *after* hunting, boiled with the meat, greaves, mashed-potatoes, and skim-milk. Biscuits and greaves, also boiled, form excellent food in the summer or off-season. All food should be given cold, and it should be boiled into pudding one day, and given the next day. The cost of feeding hounds depends on the price of oatmeal ; but about twelve pounds per annum per couple may be looked upon as an average, perhaps a low-average sum. Hounds are called by name, and, as it is termed, “ drawn,” to be fed in three, four, or five couples at a time. The door is wide open, and the meat-trough is in view of the hungry pack ; but, until called out, not one attempts to stir. Says Mr. Prior :

Abra was ready ere he named her name ;
And when he called another, Abra came.

It is very lucky that Abra was a lady and not a hound. A hound thrusting in or coming out of his turn, not when his name is called, is sent back with a flea in his ear. This is to make them know their own names, and is the only way of teaching them. The late Mr. Apperley (the celebrated “ Nimrod ”) gives a remarkable instance of the discipline at feeding-time, which occurred at Sir Bellingham Graham’s. “ Vulcan, the crowning ornament of the pack, was standing near the door waiting for his name to be called. I happened to mention it, though in rather an undertone ; then in he came and licked Sir Bellingham’s hand ; but though his

head was close to the trough, and the grateful viands smoking under his nose, he never attempted to eat ; but on his master saying to him : ‘ Go back, Vulcan ; you have no business here,’ he immediately retreated, and mixed with the hungry crowd.” Hounds should be fed once a day, with delicate exceptions ; that is to say, a hound with a delicate constitution will require a few minutes longer at the trough, and may require to be fed twice in the course of the day. Before quitting this branch of the subject, let us give two important cautions. Build your kennel in a dry spot, thoroughly well drained, and so avoid rheumatism, kennel-lameness, and nine-tenths of the ills to which dogflesh is heir ; and feed your hounds late at night, and so insure a comfortable rest for them, their keepers, and you and your guests, if the kennel be at all near the house.

And now of the staff and the stud. Foremost and most important among the former is the huntsman, who should be in the prime of life, combining vigour and experience. Too young a man is apt to be fussy, self-opinionated, and wanting in judgment ; too old a man to be slow and incapable of sufficient bodily exertion. Your huntsman should think of hunting, and nothing else ; should be submissive to no cap-ribbon ; no slave to drink, which would be fatal ; no gadabout, taproom loiterer, pothouse frequenter. During the season his exercise will prevent any thing he takes doing him any harm ; during the off-season he will find plenty to do in drilling his pack, and acquainting himself with their various peculiarities. He must ride well always, sometimes desperately ; and he must be firm, yet courteous, with those terrific strangers who crop-up occasionally at all meets, and who will over-ride the hounds. Your cockney sportsman, and your over-excitible enthusiast, who—the one from ignorance, the other from irrepressible impulse—ride close upon hounds, are the good huntsman’s direst foes. Hounds may be driven miles before the scent

by the pursuance of such a practice ; and it is not to be wondered at if the huntsman sometimes loses his temper. He is a servant, however, and must moderate his language ; but he may safely leave the unhappy transgressor to the remarks of his master, which are generally very full-flavoured. Sometimes the victim declines to bear such language.

The breeding, rearing, and training of the young hounds is entirely to be done by the huntsman ; and in the field he is master of the situation, and directs every step in progress by his voice or his horn, in the blowing of which he must be really scientific. There will be one or two whippers-in, according to the size or status of the pack. If there be two, the first is but little inferior to the huntsman, and should be qualified to take his place in his absence. One of the whips should always remain with the pack, to prevent the younger dogs from running riot, and giving tongue heedlessly. The pad-groom is also an essential adjunct to a hunting-establishment, for it is his duty to follow to cover with the second horse ; and he requires either a thorough knowledge of the country, or an innate appreciation of topography, to enable him to keep the hounds within view, to be able to skirt and cut across the country, and, withal, to meet his master at the proper place with a fresh and unblown animal. Of course the keep of such a staff is costly. The wages of huntsmen average from eighty to one hundred pounds a year, with a cottage and certain perquisites ; but there is a noble duke, an enthusiast in the sport, who gives his huntsman two hundred pounds per annum. This, however, is, of course, an utterly exceptional wage.

The first whip will cost five-and-twenty shillings a week, the second a guinea, the pad-groom a guinea, and the kennel-feeder, if there be one, another guinea a week.

The wages of neither huntsmen nor whips are high when it is remembered what brutes they ride, and they are never expected to crane at anything, but to fly ox-fence, brook,

anything that may come in their way. Nimrod relates several anecdotes which he heard from whips of their falls : one complained that his horse was “a dunghill brute,” because, “not content with tumbling, he lies on me for half-an-hour when he’s down ;” another, having had his horse fall on him, and roll him “as a cook would a pie-crust,” got up, and limping off, said, “Well now I *be* hurt.” Another acknowledged to having broken three ribs on one side and two on the other, both collar-bones, one thigh, and having had his scalp almost torn off him by a kick from a horse. Nor, if we may credit the same excellent authority, is there much thought given to these unfortunates. “Who is that under his horse in the brook?” “Only Dick Christian” (a celebrated rough-rider), answers Lord Forester; “and it’s nothing new to him !” “But he’ll be drowned !” exclaims Lord Kinnaird. “I shouldn’t wonder,” observes Mr. William Coke ; “but the pace is too good to inquire.”

In addition to huntsmen’s whips, you will require two or three helpers in your stable, at wages of from twelve shillings to fifteen shillings a week, and an earth-stopper, who will get half a guinea a week. In this estimate I have said nothing of the saddler’s nor of the farrier’s bills, most important items.

And now you have to provide horses for your staff and for yourself—dependent, of course, on the number of your servants and the number of dogs you hunt. A huntsman and two whips will require two horses each for two days a week, or eight horses for the three for three days ; the pad-groom will require a horse, and there should be a couple of hacks for messages. The master may do with three, or may be able to afford more—I should say he will require four, barring accidents. The precise cost of hunters is entirely a matter of weight and fancy. A ten-stone master of hounds, with an eye for a horse, good judgment, and talent in bargaining, can, in the country, mount himself more than decently for fifty guineas ; whereas in town the price would

be doubled. With increase in weight the price runs up frightfully, and an eighteen-stone man would give five hundred guineas for a horse, and think himself lucky, if the mount suited him in every respect. No amount of weight prevents a man from following, or even keeping hounds, if the passion be on him, and he can afford a proper mount ; there are masters of hounds of seven-and-a-half stone weight, and there are one or two ranging between eighteen and twenty stone. To get themselves properly carried, men of the latter stamp must expend an enormous sum in horse-flesh, requiring, as they do, the speed and jumping-power of the hunter, combined with the solid strength of the dray-horse. The horses for the huntsman and the whips are often good screws, or perhaps horses which, unless in constant work, are "rushers," or "pullers," or "rusty." When these animals are kept in perpetual motion, have a good deal of hard work, and can have any sudden freak of fancy taken out of them by a judiciously-administered "bucketing," they are generally useful mounts for servants. A horse with a bad mouth is often a good horse for a whip, or when an original delicate mouth is lost ; for very few uneducated men have light hands.

Horses a little worn are often bought for servants, or very young horses, if the men are good workmen, are bought and handed over to the servants to be made. Forty pounds may be taken as an average price for whips' horses, sixty pounds for huntsmen's mounts ; but there is a master in England who pays a couple of hundred guineas for his huntsmen's horses ; but then the huntsman stands six feet two. These horses are turned out from the 21st of April, and one man can look after and cut grass for six horses ; but the average price of their keep throughout the year is twenty-five pounds each ; a master of hounds may reckon that the keep of each of his own mounts is forty pounds a year.

In summing-up the question of expense, it will be well to

bear in mind the axiom of a well-known sportsman of bygone days, that “a master of hounds will never have his hand out of his pocket, and must always have a guinea in it ;” but it may be laid down as a principle that the expense generally depends upon the prudence, experience, and interest possessed by the owner of the pack and the stud. Two men have worked different counties in a season, one at the fourth of the expense incurred by the other, and the difference in sport has been inappreciable. It may, however, be taken as a fact, that the expenses of a fox-hound pack for hunting *twice* a week, including cost of hounds, horses, huntsmen, and stable-attendants, will be about fifteen hundred ; and for three times a week, two thousand pounds.

Besides the packs of hounds kept by private gentlemen, there are many subscription packs. About a thousand a year is the average amount of a subscription pack’s income, though some have larger revenue. Men of very large means will subscribe eighty or a hundred to the pack ; but twenty-five pounds a year is regarded as a very decent subscription from a man whose income is moderate. The system of “capping,” *i.e.* the huntsman’s touting round with his cap, has fallen into disuse, and would be winked at but by very few masters ; certainly no huntsman would be permitted to “cap” a stranger joining the meet, save in such a place as Brighton, where the hunt is attended by very many strangers, and where a “half-crown cap” is the regular thing.

Such are some few particulars of the cost of the noblest of British field-sports ; a pastime which lasts from youth to age, and, if we may believe the oft-quoted anecdote, becomes “the ruling passion strong in death ;” for it is related that, on its being broken to two sporting-men who were out at sea that the vessel must infallibly sink and they perish, one was silent, while the other, looking at his friend regretfully, only said : “Ah, Bob ! no more Uckerby Whin !” naming a celebrated covert where they were always sure of a find.

CHAPTER X.

MY NEWSPAPER.

THERE seems to be something in the mere fact of a man's making a speech which prevents his telling the truth. That language was given us to conceal our thoughts, we know from the subtle wisdom and biting wit of Talleyrand; but it does appear passing strange that while a man is erect on his two feet, his left hand fingering his watch-chain, while his right is tattooing on the table-cloth, he should give utterance to a series of preposterous untruths. Take my own case, for instance. Why did I, last night, at the annual summer dinner of the Most Worshipful Company of Leather-Breeches Makers, held at the Ship Tavern, Greenwich—why did I, in returning thanks for the toast of "The Visitors," declare that that was the happiest moment of my life? Seated next morning in the calm seclusion of my villa at Dulwich, and recalling the exact circumstances under which that assertion was made, I find that rarely has it been my lot to be more excessively wretched and uncomfortable. I had "come down" on board an overcrowded steamer, under the garish eye of a very hot sun; I had occupied three inches of the wooden arm of a wooden seat, with a very scarlet soldier on my right, and a child labouring under that painful and easily-caught disease, "the mumps," on my left. Revelling in the anticipation of the coming

banquet, I had been affronted by the constantly-renewed offer on the part of a boy of “refreshment,” consisting of two mouldy captain’s biscuits and three soft shiny cigars. I had been compelled to use severe language to an old person who would persist in offering me “Dawg Toby’s Gall’ry o’ Fun,” a halfpenny broadsheet of villainous woodcuts, which spoke little for Dog Toby’s sense of humour or sense of decency. Further, during dinner I had eaten more fish than I ought ; to say nothing of the enormity of duckling and peas, Nesselrode pudding, and fondu. I had taken wine with each of the worshipful Leather-Breeches Makers once, with Mr. Master twice, and with myself a good many times. I had drained a very deep goblet of claret to the Leather-Breeches Makers’ Company, “root and branch, may it flourish for ever!” (what *does* that mean?) And when I rose to my feet to respond to the mention of my name, I was pale in the face, parched in the mouth, shaky in the legs, weak in the memory, quavery in the voice, and frightened out of my senses. That was what I called the happiest moment of my life ! I should be sorry to write the word with which, in strict justice, I ought to stigmatise that expression. I know when the happiest moment of my life really comes off. Not when I receive my dividends from those very abrupt gentlemen who have, apparently, a natural hatred of their customers, across the bank-counter ; not when I go to my old wholesale grocery-stores in Lower Thames Street, and smell the tea and taste the sugar, and dip my hand into the piled-up rice, and learn from my sons of the yearly increase of the business in which I still keep my sleeping partner’s share ; not when that fair-haired knicker-bockered boy who calls me “grandad,” makes cock-horses of my knees, and rides innumerable steeple-chases, clutching at my watch-guard for a bridle ; nor when his sister, a fairy elf, makes a book-muslin glory on my lap, and kisses me as her “dear dada”—those are triumphs, if you like, but there

is something too exciting in them ; they are not the happiest moments of my life.

That blissful period is to me, so far as I can judge, about ten A.M. I have had my comfortable breakfast ; my wife has gone down to see to the domestic arrangements for the day ; if it be summer, I stroll on to the corner of my garden ; if it be winter, I shut myself into my little snug-gery ; but, summer or winter, I find laid ready for me a box of matches, my old meerschaum-bowl, ready filled, and—my newspaper. Then follows an hour composed of three thousand six hundred of the happiest moments of my life. I light my pipe and take up my paper, duly dried and cut, without which enjoyment is to me impossible. I have seen men on the outside of an omnibus attempt to fold a newspaper in a high wind, reading to the bottom of a column, and then suddenly becoming enwrapped, swathed, smothered in a tossing crackling sheet. Call that reading the newspaper ! I like to read a bit, and puff my pipe a bit, and ponder a bit ; and my ponderings are not about the machinations of the Emperor Napoleon, not about the probable result of the American war, not about the Conference, not about the state of the money-market ; but about that much talked-of march of intellect, that progress of progress, that extension of civilisation, which have shown their product in my newspaper lying before me.

Newspapers were first invented by a French physician, who found it his interest to amuse his patients by telling them the news. The avidity with which his daily gossip was received engendered the hope that, if collected and printed, it might do more than reconcile his patients to the ever-unwelcome visits of their doctor. Monsieur le Docteur Renaudot, for thus was he styled, applied therefore to Cardinal Richelieu for a patent, and the first number of *The Paris Gazette* appeared in 1662.

In the interests of my newspaper, men who have taken

high collegiate honours have last night wasted the midnight oil, and before me lies the result of their deep thought, masterly scholarship, and special study of the subject intrusted to them ; not one single word was dropped by the great orators in last night's debate, finishing at two A.M., which I do not find recordèd for my perusal ; while the vapid prosings of the dreary members have such pith as was in them extracted into a few lines. For my gratification, and that of a hundred thousand other readers, a gentleman, thoroughly competent for his task, has recorded his opinion of the merits of the new tenor who last night made his first appearance at our Opera ; while glancing a little lower down, one may experience quite a glow of satisfaction in reading the noble names of the superb ones who were present at the Princess's reception. In the next column I can see exactly how stands the latest betting on the coming races, and I also find it chronicled—in a manner which I confess I never could comprehend—how yesterday's races were run, how Cœur-de-Lion had it all his own way to Nobb's Point, closely followed by Butcher-Boy, Gipsy, Avoca, and Tatterdemalion ; how, at the distance, Butcher-Boy and Avoca ran out and collared the favourite ; and how, just before the finish, Smith called upon the mare, and, Avoca answering, was hailed the winner by a head. How on earth do they know all this ? I believe these racing-reports are exact descriptions of the struggle ; but how do the reporters manage to see all this in a lightning flight for a mile and a half, or how do they manage to distinguish the colours of the horses ? Sometimes I have fancied there are some things in a newspaper which I could do myself ; but assuredly this is not one of them. I find, too, that my journal must have several sporting-gentlemen attached to it ; for in the same column I read an account of a yacht-match at Erith, with critical remarks about the manner in which the *Flirt* was sailed by her noble owner ; and a vivid

description of a cricket-match at Lord's between the elevens of Rutland and Yorkshire, with a laudatory notice of Mr. Bales's "five-er" with a leg-swipe. In a corner of this column I also find quotations from the cotton-market at Manchester ; from the corn-markets at Leeds, Liverpool, Scotland, Ipswich ; from Messrs. Sheepshanks' trade-circular in regard to the colonial wool-sales ; and from the latest prices of hay at Smithfield and Whitechapel, where I find "the market is dull, with fair supplies." There also is spread out for me shipping-intelligence, informing me what vessels have arrived at, or passed by way of, our own ports, what vessels have been spoken with in far-distant latitudes ; there I get a meteorological report of the actual and probable state of the weather all over the United Kingdom ; and in the immediate vicinity I find an elaborate report of the state of the mining-market, whence I glean that Wheal Mary Anne advanced twenty shillings, and that Cotopaxis were rather flatter.

Hundreds of others are in the employment of my journal. In its interest a famous writer has taken the pilgrim's staff, and wandered through America desolated by her civil war, has passed through Mexico, and lingered among the islands of the Spanish Main, duly transmitting vivid descriptions of his adventures, and of the result of his observations. In the same interest, at all the principal continental cities—notably at Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, and Madrid—my journal has its agents: quiet, gentlemanly men ; now gay bachelors going into the fast society of the Cercle and the Jockey Club ; now steady middle-aged men, regular attendants on the Börsen Halle, now quaffing horchata, and puffing cigarettes on the Puerta del Sol, now colloquing with P-and-O. captains at Alexandria, or chaffing "griffs" at Suez ; but always having ears and eyes wide open, be it for a political "shave," a dancer's triumph, or a rise in the markets, and always

transmitting that intelligence instanter by letters or telegram to my journal. In the same interest two gentlemen are attched, one to the head-quarters of the Danish, another to the German army ; solemnly precise men are gliding about the Exchange, writing in their memorandum-books the latest quotations from Capel Court, the latest "done" at Gurney's, the latest whisper from the Bank parlour ; one member of the staff is flying away in one of the compartments of a royal train, while another is pursuing his inquiries among the starving poor of Bethnal Green ; one reporter has just buttoned up his note-book containing the charge of the judge to the jury trying a murderer, while another is taking down the chairman's "speech of the evening" at a charity dinner ; the fire "which was still blazing fiercely when we went to press," the murder up Islington way, which was committed late last evening, the new farce, "on which the curtain did not fall till past midnight ;" all are recorded in my journal, which also gives utterance to the cries of innumerable indignant amateur correspondents.

From my experience, the outside public which reads and delights in its newspaper has very little idea of all this enormous trouble and expense in preparing the daily sheet, and has not the smallest conception of the powers required in the various leading journalistic men. Take the editor alone. Talk of the general of an army, of his tact and readiness, what is he compared to the editor of a leading daily paper? An editor, if he be worth his salt, must possess the art of watching public taste, the art of seeing what inevitably *must* be, and the power of writing leaders, or getting them written, to say that it *shall* be. He must have the faculty of collecting materials, and finding men to deal with them ; the faculty of being able to say *something* at once on any important event which may turn up ; the faculty of dining-out well ; and when dining-out, the faculty of *not* talking, save to excite discussion and draw out

information. Men of ripe middle age make the best editors; too young they are apt to be flippant, excitable, and aggressive; too old they fall into carelessness, laxity, conventionality, and twaddle. And your editor must necessarily be a thorough citizen of the world, and determined to subdue all his own natural tastes and inclinations for the success of his journal. He may look upon the theatre with eyes of loathing; but he should take care that his dramatic criticisms are full, fair, and immediate. He may look with horror upon sporting; but his racing-reporter should be up to every move on the turf. He must never be sleepy between eight P.M. and three A.M.; must never be ill; must observe a strict Mokanna-like seclusion, and not "make himself free;" he must take every step in his business promptly, but with caution; and once having committed himself to any cause, however great, however slight, he must stick to it for ever, and defend it *per fas aut nefas* to the very best of his ability.

One of the golden rules for success in the conduct of a newspaper, and one without the adoption of which it is impossible for any journal to succeed, is—*spare no expense*. Have the very best in the market; and do not mind what you pay, so that you get it good. When the Californian rage for gold-digging began, *The Times* employed a gentleman to go out; and that he might be competent, sent him first to a gold-refiner's in the City to learn all the processes of refining, had him taken over the Mint, and sent him forth thoroughly *au courant* with all that was known of his subject in London. Then the leader-writers should be masters of their craft, *va sans dire*; and to this end it is found necessary to have men of various professions and of various tastes, to each of whom can be intrusted a special subject. Of late years it has been found that great *κῦδος*, and consequent circulation, has been occasionally obtained for several of the morning journals by some specially

admirable descriptive article ; and that style of writing has consequently been sought after and more fostered. The ordinary reporter is now kept to ordinary reporting ; and when an article descriptive of any event of peculiar interest is required, a man of higher journalistic rank is appointed to write it. Some of the descriptions of Mr. W. H. Russell and Mr. Woods in *The Times*, of Mr. G. A. Sala and Mr. Godfrey Turner in *The Telegraph*, of Mr. Justin M'Carthy and Mr. Leicester Buckingham in *The Star*, of Mr. Parkinson and Mr. Murphy in *The Daily News*, and of Mr. Williams in *The Standard*, are as good as can be, and utterly different from anything that would have been looked for in the journals twenty years since.

Although I always wondered in a vague kind of way at the manner in which my journal was produced, when I knew nothing about it, I think my astonishment has even been greater since I saw the working of the vast engine of social progress. Arriving at about ten o'clock in the evening, I found an intelligent guide awaiting me, and by him was first conducted into the library—not necessarily a portion of a newspaper establishment, but here interesting as the depository of the volumes, from their earliest sheet, of *The Times* and *The Morning Chronicle*, once conspicuous in journalism, now defunct. I took down a volume of *The Chronicle* haphazard, and opening it at the date, February 4th, 1792, read a protest of the Irish Parliament on a vote of congratulation to the king on the marriage of the Duke of York with the Princess of Prussia. The Irish gentlemen were "dissentient" because they could not "consistently with principle or honour join in thanking a sovereign whom it is in the highest degree criminal to deceive, on having entered on the government of Ireland as viceroy, a man under whose administration measures inimical to the public welfare had been supported with success, and every measure beneficial to the kingdom uniformly opposed and defeated."

The viceroy to whom this special compliment was paid was Lord Westmoreland. Poor Ireland!—well up in the grievance-market even in those distant days. In the same number I found the advertisement of a “Proposal for a complete History of England, by David Hume, Esq.”; a notice of a gallery of pictures, “by Messrs. Barry, Copley, Fuseli, and T. Lawrence;” and an announcement of the performance of *Richard the Third*—“The Queen, Mrs. Siddons; being the first time of her performing that character.”

I proceeded to a suite of rooms occupied by the sub-editor and the principal reporters. In the outermost of these rooms is arranged the electric-telegraph apparatus—three round discs, with finger-stops sticking out from them like concertina-keys, and a needle pointing to alphabetic letters on the surface of the dial. One of these dials corresponds with the House of Commons, another with Mr. Reuter’s telegraph-office, the third with the private residence of the proprietor of my journal, who is thus made acquainted with any important news which may transpire before he arrives at, or after he leaves, the office. The electric telegraph—an enormous boon to all newspaper-men—is specially beneficial to the sub-editor. By its aid he can place before the expectant leader-writer the summary of the great speech in a debate, or the momentous telegram which is to furnish the theme for triumphant jubilee or virtuous indignation; by its aid he can “make-up” the paper—that is, see exactly how much composed matter will have to be left “standing over,”—for the tinkling of the bell announces a message from the head of the reporting-staff in the House, to the effect, “House up; half a col. to come.” Sometimes, very rarely, wires get crossed or otherwise out of gear, and strange messages relating to mis-delivered firkins of butter, or marital excuses for not coming home to dinner, arrive at the office of my journal. The sub-

editor has a story how, after having twice given the signal to a West-End office which Mr. Reuter then had, he received a pathetic remonstrance from some evidently recently-awakened maiden : "Please not to ring again till I slip on my gown !" On the sub-editor's table lie the weapons of his order : a gigantic pair of scissors, with which he is rapidly extracting the pith from the pile of "flimsy" copy supplied by the aid of the manifold-writer and tissue-paper, by those inferior reporters known as penny-a-liners ; and a pot of gum, with which he fits the disjointed bits together ; here also are proofs innumerable in long slips ; red, blue, and yellow envelopes, with the name of my journal printed on them in largeletters—envelopes which have contained the lucubrations of the foreign and provincial correspondents ; an inkstand large enough to bathe in ; a red-chalk pencil like the bowsprit of a ship ; and two or three villainous-looking pens. At another table a gentleman, gorgeous in white waistcoat and cut-away coat, is writing an account of a fancy-fair, at which he has been present ; printers, messengers, boys, keep rushing in asking questions and delivering messages ; but they disturb neither of the occupants of the room. The fancy-fair gentleman never raises his eyes from his paper, while, amid all the cross-questioning to which he is subjected, the sub-editor's scissors still snip calmly on.

Next to the composing-room, where I find about seventy men at work "setting" small scraps of copy before them. The restless scissors of the head of the room divide the liner's description of horrible events at a position of breathless interest, and distribute the glorious peroration of a speech among three or four compositors, who bring up their various contribution of type to the long "galley" in which the article is put together. These men work on an average from four P.M. till two A.M., or half-past two (in addition to these there are the regular "day-hands," or men employed in the daytime, who work from nine till five). They are

mostly from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age ; though there is one old man among them who is approaching threescore-and-ten, and who is reported almost as good as any of his juniors. They earn from three to four guineas a-week each. The room is large, and though innumerable gaslights are burning, the ventilation is very good.

I glanced at some of the writing at which the men were working ; and as I thought of the fair round text in which my ledgers and day-books were always entered up, and then looked at the thin jiggling hieroglyphics which, in close lines, and adorned with frequent erasures and corrections, lay before the eyes of those poor compositors, I shuddered at the contrast. On inquiring, however, I found that the compositors made very light of cacography, and that it was seldom indeed that a man had to refer to his neighbour to help him in deciphering a word.

Although a printer may be sitting all day, yet in his own way he is a great traveller, or, at least, his hand is. A good printer will set eight thousand ems a-day, or about twenty-four thousand letters. The distance travelled over by his hand will average about one foot per letter, going to the boxes in which they are contained, and of course returning, making two feet every letter he sets. This would make a distance each day of forty-eight thousand feet, or a little more than nine miles ; and in a year, leaving out Sundays, that member travels about three thousand miles.

From the composing-room I, and a certain amount of type duly set and locked up in a “ forme,” proceeded to the foundry—a workshop covered with scraps of metal-filings, and with a furnace in the middle of it. Unlike their fellow-workmen of the village of Auburn, as described by Goldsmith, the smiths in the foundry of my journal by no means relaxed their ponderous strengths and leaned to hear, but were obviously far too hard at work to do anything of the kind. So soon as the type-containing formes arrive, they are

hammered all over with a mallet to reduce them to an average level and consistency ; then they are oiled, and an exact imprint is taken of them on what is called a "matrix"—a preparation of French-chalk on stiff paper. This matrix is then dried over a furnace on hot metal plates ; a mixture of lead and antimony in a liquid boiling state is poured on it, taking the exact form of the indented letters, filling up every crack and crevice, and becoming, in many reduplicated forms, the actual substance from which the journal is printed, and which to that end is sent to the machine-room, whither I followed it.

The machine-room of my journal is a vast whitewashed hall, with three enormous clang ing, plunging, whirling metal demons in the midst of it, attended by priests and devotees, half of whom are employed in administering to their idols' appetites by feeding them with virgin paper, while the other half wrenches from them the offering after it has passed through the ordeal. In plainer language, the demons are three of Hoe's most powerful printing-machines, containing together twenty-six cylinders, and in attendance upon them are eighty men and boys, half of whom feed the machines with fresh paper, while the other half receive the sheets after they have passed under the cylinders. The cylinders in these machines make one million four hundred and five thousand revolutions in the course of one night, and for a single day's circulation travel at the rate of nearly nine hundred and eighty-five miles. When its machines are in full swing, my journal is produced at the rate of eight hundred and eighty-four copies per minute. The length of paper used in one day in my journal will make a path one yard wide and nearly one hundred and sixteen miles long ; one day's circulation placed edge to edge would closely cover a piece of land of nearly forty-three acres ; one week's circulation, placed one on top of the other, would make a column three hundred and nineteen feet high. The

weight of paper used in one day's circulation of my journal is seven tons thirteen hundred-weight two quarters and twenty pounds ; there are also three hundred and ninety-six pounds of ink consumed in one night's printing ; and the length of tape used upon the machines is a little over four miles. In the midst of all this whirling, dazzling confusion, accidents very seldom occur ; the ringing of a bell, the movement of a handle, and the rotation of the engine ceases instantaneously. To a stranger the vast room, with its glare of gas, its smell of oil and steam, and its whirring engines, is a kind of orderly Pandemonium. There are galleries whence he can survey all that passes ; but a few minutes must elapse before his eyes become accustomed to the tearing of the engine, and his ears to the clangor discord ; though those employed seem thoroughly habituated, and pursue their avocations as though they were in the quiet composing-room itself. Indeed, the head-engineer, who acted as my guide in this department, had such interest in his work, that he told me he seldom took a holiday or absented himself from his post. He evidently regarded those who did not ordinarily spend their evenings in the company of his machines as inferior beings.

So the demons go clangor through the night, until they are supposed to have had as much as is good for them, and their fires are raked out, their steam is let off, and machinists and feeding-boys go home to bed, whither the compositors and the sub-editor have long since preceded them. Then the advanced guard of the day establishment, in the persons of the publisher and his staff, appear upon the scene. The street outside is lined with light spring-carts, with those peculiarly bony horses which always seem to come into newsvendors' hands ; crowds of men and boys fight up the passage to the publishing-office, while inside there is a hullabaloo, compared to which the howling at an Irish wake is silence, and the parrot-house at the Zoological Gardens is

a quiet retreat. Right has very little chance against might in such a medley as this, and the weakest usually goes to the wall ; but eventually the big wooden tables are cleared, the last load has been carried to the van, the last boy has rushed off with his arms full of damp literature, and the starters by the Parliamentary for Liverpool at seven have my journal on their knees, while merchant-princes resident in Brighton, and coming thence by the “ daily-bread ” express at a quarter to ten, find it on their breakfast-tables at half-past eight.

Taking such things into consideration, is it wonderful that I regard my newspaper as a marvel, and that I from time to time lay it down to ponder over the capital, talent, and energy involved in its production ?

CHAPTER XI.

GUNNING.

GUNNING is my theme ; not the patronymic of those three beautiful sisters who fired the hearts (if the dried-up integuments can be so called) of the court gentlemen in the time of the Regent, but the great art of shooting ; on English manor or Scottish moor, from the back of a pony or the bows of a punt, in solitary ramble or grand battue ; indulged in by my lord with his party of friends, his keepers, his gillies, and his beaters ; by Bill Lubbock the poacher, known to the keepers as an “inweterate,” with his never-missing double-barrel and his marvellous lurcher ; or by Master Jones, home for the holidays from Rugby, who has invested his last tip in a thirty-shilling Birmingham muzzle-loader, with which he “pots” sparrows in the Willesden fields. Gunning, which binds together men of otherwise entirely opposite disposition and tastes ; which gives many a toiler in cities pent such healthful excitement and natural pleasure as enable him to get through the eleven dreary months, hanging on to the anticipation of those thirty happy days when the broad stubble-fields will stretch around him, and the popping of the barrels make music in his ear. Gunning, a sport so fascinating, that to enjoy it men in the prime of life, with high-sounding titles and vast riches, will leave their comfortable old ancestral homes, and the pleasant

places in which their lines have been cast, and go away to potter for weeks in a miserable little half-roofed shanty on a steaming barren Highland moor, or will risk life and limb in grim combat with savage animals in deadly jungle or dismal swamp. Gunning, whose devotees are numbered by myriads, the high-priest whereof is Colonel Peter Hawker, of glorious memory, who has left behind him an admirable volume of instruction in the art. Not unto me to attempt to convey hints, "wrinkles," or "dodges" to the regular gunner ; mine be it simply to discourse on the inner life of the art, showing what can be done, in what manner, and for how much ; and giving certain practical information in simple and concise form to the neophyte.

And first to be mentioned in a treatise, however humble, on gunning, are guns. A muzzle-loading double gun, by a first-class London maker, costs forty guineas, or with its cases and all its fittings, fifty guineas. The leading provincial makers, and those of Scotland and Ireland, charge from thirty to forty pounds complete ; most of their guns are, however, in reality manufactured in Birmingham, where the price of a double gun varies from twenty pounds to two pounds five shillings, or even less, according to quality. The second-class London makers charge from twenty-five to thirty-five pounds ; but most of their work is made at Birmingham, and only "finished" in London. The London work is much the best ; for, as the wages paid are much higher, London attracts the best workmen from all parts of the country. Another reason is, the greater independence of the workmen in London. In Birmingham, especially—between trade agreements on the part of the masters, and trade-unions on the part of the men—a man who can work better or more quickly than his fellows is continually hampered ; and he generally makes his way to London, where he finds a fairer market for his labour, and fewer restrictions. The situation of Birmingham, near to the

coal-producing districts, renders the cost of fuel much less than in London ; and all the operations which require a large expenditure of fuel, such as the welding and forging of the barrels, etc., are done at Birmingham, even for best guns ; and it is frequently asked, since all the materials, barrels, etc. come from Birmingham, why pay the much higher prices of London makers for the same thing ? meaning, that as the London makers get their barrels (the chief portion of the gun) from Birmingham, the prices they charge are extortionate. Now, what the London barrel-maker really does get from Birmingham is simply two rough tubes of wrought iron, not fit in their then condition even to serve as gas-pipes. All that makes them of any value as gun-barrels—the boring, filing, putting together for shooting, etc.—has to be done in London at four times the cost, and generally with ten times the accuracy, of Birmingham work. The fallacy lies in supposing that “the same thing” is obtained in both cases. If what a man buys when he purchases a gun be merely the six pounds of wrought iron and steel in the barrel and locks, and the half a foot of walnut plank in the stock, the value of these materials at twenty pounds a ton for the metal and a shilling a foot for the wood is less than five shillings for the whole, and he may well consider he is overcharged if he pay a pound for the complete gun. But what he buys is really the time and technical skill of the contriver, the time and skill of the workman, the waste of manufacture (and how enormous this frequently is, may be judged from the fact that ninety pounds of rough metal will be consumed in making a pair of Damascus gun-barrels weighing about six pounds when finished) ; these are the real things purchased, and whether the buyer pay ten or fifty pounds, he will generally get only the value of his money, and no more. Skill and time can never be brought to the same close competition as the price of raw material, and the tendency

of both is to become dearer, instead of cheaper, every day.

During the last four or five years the use of breech-loading guns has become common in England. The system adopted is called the “Lefaucheux,” from the name of its inventor, and it has been general in France for many years. Twenty-five years ago some guns of this pattern were brought from Paris by Mr. Wilkinson, of Pall Mall, who endeavoured to introduce their use into England, but without success; and they were finally sold at one-fourth their cost, as curiosities only. The price of breech-loading guns of best quality is five guineas more than muzzle-loaders; they are sold in Birmingham at from eight pounds to thirty pounds. The advantages of a breech-loader to young sportsmen are, principally, that the guns cannot be overloaded, two charges cannot go into the same barrel; the charge can be taken out in an instant; and though, if the gunner be clumsy, he may shoot a friend, he cannot by any possibility shoot himself. This little distinction is highly appreciated, since accidents in loading from the muzzle were by no means unfrequent.

To a moderate-minded man, three or four thousand acres in England would be a good manor, of which four hundred should be covert. Potatoes used to be good covert, now the best is clover left for seed, mangold, swedes and turnips, beans, etc. The usual price is one shilling per acre; but in the neighbourhood of London and large towns the rent is higher, and the value arbitrary. For four thousand acres, to do the thing well, one should have a head-keeper, whose cost will be as follows: a house, a guinea a week for wages, five pounds a year for clothes, twelve pounds a year for ammunition, a certificate three pounds, and a “deputation” from the lord of the manor, without which he cannot, I believe, legally take a gun away from a poacher. He generally has a pony and a spring-cart allowed

him, sometimes the keep of a dog. It has been well observed, that “it is not every fellow with a short jacket and half-a-dozen pockets, that is fitted for a game-keeper.” He must be trustworthy; for he has in the mowing-time to pay a shilling a nest to the mowers, sometimes to pay for the destruction of vermin, etc., and he can cheat if he like. He should be a good, but not a noted or crack shot—not such a shot as keeps his hand in by practice on his master’s game; and he should be thoroughly knowing in the habits of all manner of vermin, and in the mode of destroying them. He should not be allowed to break dogs for anyone save his master, or to rear pets, or in fact to do any extraneous duty. A game-keeper’s situation is a pleasant one when he and his master pull together. There is always enough to do, both in and out of season, to keep a zealous man fully employed. He should be brave, yet not pugnacious; amicable, and on good terms with the neighbouring farmers, yet not sufficiently so ever to wink at poaching, however mild—and the natural instinct for poaching, even amongst farmers of the better class, is something marvellous—and civil and attentive to his master’s guests. (N.B.—It is usual to give a keeper five shillings for the day, if shooting at a friend’s manor, and then he cleans your gun; at a grand battue, a guinea is frequently given, but for a day’s *partridge*-shooting five shillings is ample. This, be it remembered, is expected.) Your head-keeper will want a man under him, with wages of twelve shillings a week, and a house, and at certain seasons watchers or night-men. These are generally paid by the night. The beaters employed at battues are very frequently old men or boys on the estate, who are fit for nothing else; they get from one shilling to half-a-crown for their day’s job.

For such a manor as I have pictured, two brace of pointers or setters, and one retriever, would be enough, and a good close-working spaniel, or a brace or leash, according

to fancy. A brace of well-broken second-season setters should be purchasable at from twenty-five to thirty pounds ; spaniels at five pounds each ; a good retriever would be cheap at twenty guineas, ten pounds being a very common price. If possible, by all means breed your own dogs, or get them bred by your friends ; a purchased pointer is a pig in a poke—purchased, I mean, through the medium of an advertisement or from a regular dealer. Some animals so bought have never even had powder burnt over them, cower at the shot, and fly away from home immediately afterwards ; others have a kind of “crammed” instruction—that is to say, they will be very good when kept in constant practice, but if left at home for a few days will forget all they have learnt, and come into the field wild and ignorant. Pointers are more useful than setters for partridge-shooting, easier to train, less liable to take cold, more easily steadied, and more tenacious of instruction. On the other hand, setters are superior for grouse-shooting, being harder-footed. Spaniels are the most useful of all dogs : there are two classes—the “mute,” which are the best for all practical purposes ; and those which fling their tongues, begin their noise as soon as they are put into cover, put all game on the alert, and send every jack-hare and old cock-pheasant out of the other end. A spaniel should stop when he rouses a rabbit or hare, should never range more than thirty yards from the gun, should drop when the gun goes off, and should then lie until signalled on. He should go through any furze or brambles like a rat ; should be short on his legs, long in his body, have a long head, go to water, and retrieve alive ; he should work with his tail down, and the set of the tail should be down also. His ears should be bell-shaped, small at the top and large at the bottom. The best breed is the “Clumber” spaniel, which is always mute, always lemon-and-white in colour, but not generally fond of the water. The next best breed is the Sussex, liver-and-

white ; the darker the liver, the better ; the best-marked have a white blaze down the face, white muzzle, liver nose, lips flecked with liver, and flecked legs, belly and hips white, and white collar and chest. The most fashionable spaniels are mute black-and-white, or black-and-tan, legs, feet, and toes well feathered before and behind, and the feet round as a cheese-plate. As to retrievers : when you hear people speak of a genuine retriever, do not place much credit in their assertions, as there is no regular breed, and the best retrievers are generally mongrels, half-poodle, half-swaniel, and sometimes with a cross of Newfoundland. A well-taught retriever combines the qualities of pointer, setter, spaniel, and water-dog, with his own peculiar instinct of fetching a dead bird out of any brake, and carrying him with jaws of iron and teeth of wool. I need not say that such a dog is invaluable.

If you go in for pheasant-breeding, you go in for expense at once. The artificial food for three hundred pheasants, *until they shoot their tails*, would cost fifteen or twenty pounds. By artificial food I mean eggs, rice, greaves, chopped onions, lettuce, etc. I should say that every pheasant shot on any manor costs twelve shillings, for they *must* be reared by hand. The good friend with whom I have had many a pleasant day in the woods, calculates the cost of his birds at a pound each ; but he does everything in an unnecessarily princely fashion, and has a staff of keepers and beaters inferior to none in number or cost.

Grouse-shooting in England can be pursued in Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Westmoreland, in some parts of Wales, in Kerry, Limerick, Wicklow, and Tipperary in Ireland, and in the Scotch Highlands. Within the last few years grouse-shooting has become such a fashionable amusement, that the prices of moors have risen enormously, and have at length attained a fabulous height. Twenty years ago, the highest price for a moor of from twenty to forty thousand

acres, fit for four guns, was four hundred pounds ; you would be lucky now to get it for double the money. This is owing to the manufacturing gentry, who are tremendously keen groucers, and have a general leaning towards gunning, and can afford to pay magnificently. Here it may be well to call attention to the advertisements of moors to be let for the season, the owner of which stipulates that the tenant shall “be limited to a thousand brace !” He must not shoot more, for fear of thinning the stock on the moor. *Caveat emptor.* The intending answerer of such advertisement may safely pledge himself to abide by this stipulation, and if he and his friends bag three hundred brace, they may think themselves highly favoured. Setters and pointers (Russian and Spanish preferred by some) are the best dogs to shoot grouse to ; the time, between the 12th of August and the 20th of September, though some talk of October, and even the early days of November, but you will get better grousing between the dates I have mentioned ; a large-bored gun, and, if with a muzzle-loader, No. 3 shot. Colonel Hawker says : “Grouse take a harder blow than partridges.”

Also in the sporting journals, under the heading “To Let,” you will find the entry : “Splendid deer-forests.” A deer-forest is so named on the celebrated *lucus à non lucendo* principle ; it does not contain a single tree, but is simply a Highland tract of land from which sheep have been kept off—as sheep and deer will never feed together. The most celebrated are the deer-forests of Lord Lovat, the Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Athol, and, above all, of the Marquis of Breadalbane. For a good deer-forest, a thousand a year is a low price ; and every deer shot costs, on an average, from sixty to eighty pounds. Let no man, unpossessed of great bodily strength, with lasting power and patience, undertake deer-stalking. To walk for miles to the shooting-ground, to crawl on all-fours or on the stomach for

several hundred yards through brake and brushwood, and then to take steady aim at a distance of over a hundred yards at about the least, requires men in high training and of natural bodily strength. But your amateur, however good, is never equal to your gillie, whose eye is more acute than the best Dollond or reconnoittrer ; whose arm is as steady as a rock, after any amount of exertion ; and who goes up any number of the stiffest braes without turning a hair, or apparently without an extra pulsation. A knowing shot, your gillie, and one who never neglects an opportunity They tell a story of a noble lord who, last year, was out on his moor with his favourite gillie, when he spied a noble stag about four hundred yards off. The nobleman put his rifle to his shoulder, covered the object, then lowered his piece. “ Donald ! ” said he. “ Me lard ! ” said Donald. “ That’s a fine shot.” “ Et wad be a faine shot for the mon as wad het it,” was the Highlander’s sententious reply. “ Take the rifle, Donald, sight it carefully, and give it me back ; if I knock over that fellow, the rifle shall be yours.” The gillie took the rifle and sighted it, and gave it to his master, who fired, and killed his stag. According to his promise, he gave the rifle to the gillie. Since then he has never been taken nearer than four hundred yards to any deer on his estate !

Never let any ribald “ chaff,” any denunciation of Cockney sport, prevent you from enjoying a good day’s rabbit-shooting whenever you have the opportunity. With a couple of mute spaniels and a sharp terrier, you may have an excellent morning’s sport ; but you must remember that it is very quick shooting, and you must keep your gun on the cock, and be ready to pull the instant you see the rabbit run, if you would have a chance of hitting him. Be wary, for rabbits are wonderfully “ up to trap ;” pretend not to be looking after them, and you will throw them off their guard ; but if you advance in a business-like manner, gun in

hand, depend upon it that a flash of white tails is all you will see of your game—of the older ones, at least; the younger are less knowing, and more easily potted.

For any hints about wild-fowl shooting, go to Colonel Hawker, and consult no other. He is a little rococo and old-fashioned; but in the main he is as right now as he was when he wrote, and his advice is sound, practical, and sensible. Take it all with that “grain of salt” which the old Latin proverb prescribes; for though there lived strong men before Agamemnon, there are not many men strong enough to undergo all the hardships which Colonel Peter Hawker lightly touches upon in his hints on wild-fowl shooting.

It is unusual to take a dog with you when invited to a day’s shooting. But in partridge-shooting, when you receive the invitation, it is common to ask the question: “How are you off for dogs?” and to take them if wanted. To take your dogs over without having ascertained the wish of your host, will cause you to be regarded as rather a cool hand. Perhaps, after all, spaniels are the most serviceable animals; setters and pointers are not much used in England, as there is little “laying” for birds under the new system of farming, and now turnips are drilled, birds rise before the dogs.

Finally, do not imagine that you can leave the London season, the jolly nights in the Club smoke-room, the heavy dinners with ingoted East-Indian uncles, the twenty-one dances winding-up with a never-ending cotillon, indulged in night after night; and then go down to Norfolk, or wherever may be the manor to which you are invited, and shoot. The thing is impossible. You must be, to a certain extent, in training; at all events, your wind must be decent, your muscles braced, and your hand and eye steady. A long waltz may be good for your wind, but it will shake your arm; and a pipe of Cavendish or a couple of extra cigars will spoil your sport for the day. So do not be down-

hearted at first if you fire wild, or if the squire and his country friends grin a bit as the birds fly away unharmed ; wait—let your faith be “large in Time,” as Mr. Tennyson has it ; and very soon you will feel your hand getting in, and you will find that, as sweet Will, who has something on everything, says : “Your shooting then is well accounted.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE GRIMGRIBBER RIFLE CORPS: WE COMMENCE THE “MOVEMENT.”

IT was not until long after this grand patriotic volunteer movement had been started that we began to talk of it at Grimgribber, and it was much later before we thought of joining it. You see we are rather peculiar at Grimgribber—not aristocratic, perhaps, but decidedly rich, and on that account rather high and stand-off-ish. We live in large houses, considerably given to portico ; we carpet our halls, and therein do a good deal in the proof-before-letter prints and stag's-horn and fox's-foot hat-rail line ; we have very large gardens, with graperies and pineries, and everything that can cost money ; but we are decidedly not sociable. To tell the truth, Grimgribber is, perhaps, a thought over-done with Quakerdom, having been selected as the favoured spot in which some of the choicest spirits of the Peace Society have pitched their mortal tents, and the consequence is, that it requires the greatest exertions to prevent our general notions from becoming too drab-coloured ; so that when we read in the newspapers of the formation of the various corps, we merely shrugged our shoulders, and said, “Ah !” in rather an admonitory tone ; and it was not until the announcement that the Queen would probably receive the officers and review the troops, that the possibility of

there being a Grimgribber regiment dawned upon us. I am bound to confess that the idea did not originate with me, but with Jack Heatly, a young stockbroker, who was always looked upon as a dangerous character, and who, when at a very early stage of affairs he joined a metropolitan rifle corps, was considered as having booked himself for perdition. Under cover of the darkness of night, and with extraordinary mystery (for even his bold spirit quailed at the audacity of his plan), Jack paid me a visit one evening last December, and imparted to me his ideas for the formation of the Grimgribber volunteers. The first of his large-souled propositions was, that he should be made captain ; the second, that I should undertake all the work ; the third, that I should mention the scheme to all likely persons, in my own name at first, but if it met with approval, in his.

I was struck with Jack's magnanimity, and fell into his views ; so, likely persons were seen, and agreed at once to the rough outline of the scheme—Grimgribber should have a rifle corps ; that was decided on ; all details could be entered into at a public meeting, which should be forthwith advertised and held in the lecture-room of our Literary Institute. The consternation with which the drab-coloured portion of our population received this announcement cannot be described ; the head-shakings, the hand-upliftings were awful, and the accusative case of the second person singular was joined to every verb of monition and reproach, and applied to us rigorously. But we managed to make way even against this, and we held our meeting. One of the county members had promised to preside, and at eight o'clock the room was crammed and beginning to get noisy, but the county member had not arrived ; then I, as secretary, explained this to the meeting, and proposed that someone else should take the chair ; and someone else accordingly took it, and had just reached a triumphant point in his peroration, when the door was burst open, and the county

member walked in, in a white waistcoat and a rage ; and we had to begin all over again. But still we had a very great success. I had drawn up a set of rules, based on those of Jack Heatly's former corps, and these met with great approval ; an enemy had obtained admission, and he caused some disturbance by uttering a very loud and sarcastic “ Hear, hear ! ” after one of them which inflicted a fine of five shillings for discharging the rifle by accident ; and when I sat down, he rose and proceeded to comment on this rule, declaring it absurd to punish a person for an offence committed accidentally. But Jack got up, and in an oration of unexampled eloquence completely demolished our adversary, by proving to him what a consolation it would be to the surviving relations of any unfortunate person who might be thus killed, to think that the cause of the accident had been made to pay for his carelessness. And then an old gentleman, long resident in the village, and reputed to have been the author of some very spirited verses on the Prince Regent's coronation, which actually found their way into print, rose, and recited some poetry which he had forged for the occasion, in which Britannia was represented as bestowing crowns of laurel on each of her “ commercial sons ; ” and this brought the meeting to a close with a storm of triumph.

OUR COUNCIL AND ITS FUNCTIONS.

On a convenient desk outside the meeting-room we had placed a large broadsheet, to which each intending “ effective ” member was to sign his name, and before the lecture-hall was closed we had seventy signatures. The seventy pledged ones met the next day and elected their officers—Jack Heatly, of course, being chosen captain ; his brother, lieutenant ; and I myself receiving the distinguished post of ensign. To any gentleman content with moderate exercise and a good position, I recommend the ensign's berth ; his

lungs are left intact, for he never has to shout the word of command ; he is never in that awful doubt which seizes upon the other officers as to whether they are “on the right flank,” as he has simply to walk behind the rear rank in the centre of the company ; he is not liable to be shot by the enemy, or by his own men ; and he can gain a character for smartness with little trouble, by merely occasionally uttering the caution, “Steady, now !” “Easy in the centre !” “Keep your fours in the wheel !” and such-like mandates, delivered in an admonitory voice. He is, in fact, the Lord Burleigh of the company, and best comports himself by grave silence and stern military aspect.

When the selection of officers had been made, we set to work and chose certain gentlemen to be members of council. We had seen that other corps had a council, and it was therefore necessary that we should have one ; but, beyond checking the expenses of the regiment, we were not at all clear as to what were the council’s functions. We soon found out. The members of the council were exclusively privates, and it appeared that their first and most urgent duties were to oppose every arrangement made by the officers, and to endeavour in every possible manner to set the corps by the ears. Did Jack Heatly, as captain commanding, issue an order, the council was down upon him like a shot, had him up like Othello before the Senate, and harangued him with Old-Bailey-like politeness and Central-Criminal-Court etiquette. Did the lieutenant, a shy and retiring young man, make a mistake in his word of command, he was summoned the next day before the Vehmgericht, had his error pointed out to him, was told to make himself immediately master of a few instructions contained in very small type in a fat red-covered quarto volume of some eight-hundred pages, and was dismissed with a rather more severe reprimand than if he had stolen a watch. Did I endeavour to come to the rescue, I was received with

bland smiles and disbelieving shoulder-shrugs, and with pleasant hints that "the subaltern officers had really better not expose themselves." Now this was trying to all, especially to Jack Heatly, who is as explosive as a volcano, and who used to make a light meal off his lips and tongue in endeavouring to maintain his reticence ; but as the members of the council were indefatigable in their zeal at drill, punctual in their attendance, and showed thoroughly that they had the welfare of the corps at heart, we put up with it all, and got rapidly under weigh.

Of course it was necessary that we should accumulate as ample funds as possible, besides the subscription of the members ; and with this view the council determined that a select few of us should call upon the inhabitants and ask for donations. The list of names was divided into three portions ; and I as junior officer had the most implacable enemies of the movement allotted to me to visit. Now it has been my fate to have been placed in many humiliating positions during my life. I have been compelled to act a knight in a charade with a tin-pot on my head for a helmet and a towel-horse for my charger, and in this guise to make love to a very stout old lady before the grinning faces of deriding friends. I have been asked to "do" an orange "nicely" for a young lady at dessert, and, owing to my having blind eyes and utterly immobile stiff fingers, have bungled thereat in a manner contemptible to behold. On the King's Road, at Brighton, I have ridden a flea-bitten gray horse, formerly a member of a circus, which, in the presence of hundreds of the aristocracy then and there assembled, persisted in waltzing to the music of a German band. But never was I so thoroughly ashamed of myself as on the errand of requesting donations for the Grimgrubber volunteers. In ten places they told me plainly they would not give anything ; and next to those who gave willingly, I liked these best : in others, they shook their heads and

sighed, and said it did not augur well for any movement which began by sending round the begging-box. Some were virtuously indignant, and denounced us as openly inciting foreign attack by our braggadocio ; some declined to give because they were comfortably persuaded that the end of the world was so close at hand that our services would never be required ; one old farmer, known to be enormously rich and horribly penurious, offered us a threepenny-piece, a brass tobacco-box, and a four-bladed knife with a corkscrew in the handle.

But perhaps my noblest interview was with Mr. Alumby, our senior churchwarden, who lives at The Hassocks, close outside the village, and who has the credit of being the best hand at an excuse of any man in the county. Overwhelmingly polite was Alumby, offered me a chair with the greatest hospitality, spoke about our Queen, our country, our national defences, and the patriotic body of men now coming forward, in a way that made my ears tingle ; but he declined to subscribe, on principle—on principle alone. In any other possible manner that he could aid us, he would ; but he could not give us money, as he thought such a proceeding *would deprive the movement of its purely voluntary character !* I was so staggered that I paused for a moment, overcome ; then I suggested that this feeling might not prevent his helping us in another way : we wanted a large space to drill in—would he lend us his field ? He hesitated for a minute, and then asked if I meant his field in Grim-gribber, at the back of his house. On my replying in the affirmative, his face expressed the deepest concern ; “he could not spare a blade of that grass, not a blade—he required it all for grazing purposes, and it must not be trampled upon ; but he had considerable property in South Wales, and if that had been any use to us, he could have put hundreds of acres at our disposal.” However, notwithstanding these rebuffs, we collected a very respectable

sum of money, and thought ourselves justified in really commencing operations. Of course the first and most important operation was

OUR DRILL.

He to whom our military education was confided was a sergeant in the Welsh Bombardier Guards, and he brought with him a corporal of the same regiment as his assistant. The sergeant was short and stout; the corporal tall and thin; both had hair greased to the point of perfection, and parted with mathematical correctness; perched on the extreme right verge of his head the corporal accurately balanced a little cap. Off duty the sergeant was occasionally human in his appearance and manners, but the corporal never. In his mildest aspect he resembled a toy-soldier; but when, either in giving command or taking it from his sergeant, he threw up his head, stiffened his body, closed his heels, and stuck out his hands like the signs at a French glove-shop reversed, I can find no words to describe his wooden nonentity. I think we all felt a little awkward at our first introduction to our instructors. They surveyed us, as we were drawn up in line, grimly and depreciatingly; in obedience to a look from his superior, the corporal then fell a pace or two back and assumed the statuesque attitude; while the sergeant rapped his cane against his leg, and exclaimed: "Now, gen'l'men, **FALL IN!**" the first two words being uttered in his natural voice, the last two in an awful sepulchral tone, and sounding like a double rap on a bass kettle-drum.

We "fell in" as we best could—that is, we huddled together in a long line—and were then "sized" by the sergeant, who walked gravely down the rank, and inspected us as though we had been slaves in the market of Tripoli, and he the Dey's emissary with a large commission to buy; and then commenced our preliminary instruction. The

first manœuvre imparted to us was to “stand at ease”—a useful lesson, teaching us not only the knowledge of a strategic evolution, but giving us quite a new insight into the meaning of the English language. In our former benighted ignorance we might possibly have imagined that to stand at ease meant to put our hands in our pockets, to lean against the wall, or to lounge in any easy and comfortable manner ; but we now learned that, in order to stand really at ease, we should strike the palm of our left hand very smartly with the palm of our right, then fold the right over the back of the left in front of us, protrude our left foot, throwing the weight of the body on the right, and, in fact, place ourselves as nearly as possible in the attitude of Pantaloona when he is first changed by the fairy, minus his stick. It is an elegant and telling manœuvre this, when properly executed, and possibly not very difficult of acquirement : but we did not fall into it all at once ; there was a diversity of opinion among us as to which was the proper foot to be advanced ; and when that was settled, we were at variance as to which was our right foot and which our left ; so that it was not until the sergeant had many times sarcastically assured us that “he couldn’t hear them hands come smartly together as he’d wished—not like a row of corks a-poppin’ one after the other, but all at once ;” nor until the stiff corporal had paraded up and down behind us, muttering, in a low tone : “Them *left* feet advanced—no, no ! them *left* feet advanced,” that we were considered sufficiently perfect in this respect, and allowed to pass on to grander evolutions. The same difficulty was attendant upon these. On being told to “right face,” two gentlemen, of diametrically opposed views on the subject, would find themselves face to face instead of being one behind the other, and neither would give way until they were set right by the sergeant.

It was not until after some time that we hit upon the golden principle of drill, which is—NEVER TO THINK AT

ALL ! Listen, pay attention to the word of command as it is given, and then follow your first impulse; it will generally be the right one. But the recruit who hesitates is lost. Under the present system the simplest movements are taught—not by example, but in directions composed of long sentences abounding in technical expressions, listening to which the unhappy learner, long before the sergeant has come to the middle of his direction, is oblivious of the first part, ignorant of the meaning of the last, and in a thorough fog as to the whole. These directions are learnt parrot-wise by the sergeants, and repeated in a monotonous and unintelligible tone ; the men who make use of them know no more what they are saying than those who are addressed ; and an example two minutes long does more good than an hour's precept. It is perfectly true that to the educated intelligence of the volunteers is due the superiority which, so far as rapidity of progress is concerned, they have shown over the ordinary recruits ; but a very slight exercise of this educated intelligence will suffice for most of the evolutions.

When the command has been received on the tympanum, act upon it at once, without pausing to reflect. You will see many intelligent men bring upon themselves the wrath of their sergeant, simply because, in analysing and pondering on his instructions, they have missed the right time for action, and are half a minute or so behind the rest of their company. For instance, the command is given : "At the word 'Fours' the rear-rank will step smartly off with the left foot, taking a pace to the rear—Fours !" Or, in the sergeant's language: "Squad ! 'shun ! at th'wud 'Foz' the rer-rank will stepsma't lyoffwi' th' leffut, tekkinapesstoth' rare—Fo-o-o-res !" the last word being uttered in a prolonged and discordant bellow. A reflective gentleman in the rear-rank first translates this dialect into the ordinary language of civilised life, and then proceeds to ponder on its meaning ; and when he has discovered it, he probably finds

himself deserted by his comrades, who have taken up a position a pace behind him, and an object of disgust to the sergeant, who, looking at him more in pity than in anger, says, in a hoarse whisper, "Now, Number Three, what, wrong agin!"

When I remember the unique series of performances that inaugurated our first lessons in marching, I cannot imagine that we were then the same set of Grimgribber volunteers who defiled so steadily before her Majesty the other day, amidst the bravos of enthusiastic crowds. I think our original evolutions were even sufficient to astonish our sergeant, a man not easily overcome ; for, at the conclusion of the first lesson, I observed him retreat to a distant corner of the parade-ground, strike himself a heavy blow on the chest, and ejaculate, "Well, if never!" three distinct times. I recollect that two-thirds of our number had peculiar theories of their own, and that each trying his own plan led to confusion. For instance, the gentleman who would step off with his right foot, at the third step found his leg firmly wedged between the ankles of his precursor, and utterly lost the use of that limb ; the light and swinging gait which was admirably adapted for the pursuit of a country postman was found scarcely to tally with the sober, slodgy walk of two-thirds of the corps, who were accordingly trodden down from the calf to the heel, and who did not view the matter with all the equanimity which good fellowship should engender. A third step, of a remedial tendency, consisting of a wide straddling of the legs, and an encircling of the feet of the person immediately in front of you by your own, was not agreeably received by the sergeant, and had to be abandoned ; so it was some time before we presented that unanimity of action which is necessary to satisfactory marching.

But we stuck to it manfully, and progressed well. The sergeant, who at first seemed disposed to give us up in

despair, because he could not swear at us as was his custom, began to take an interest in us ; and when we had overcome what he called the “roodymans” of drill, we took an interest in our instructions. We had a very stormy debate about our uniform, discussed every variety of gray and green, lost an exceedingly efficient member by declining to adopt what he called a “Garibaldi shako,” but which, in plain English, was a green wagoner’s hat with a cock’s feather at the side ; and finally settled upon a very quiet and inexpensive dress. Then, of course, after a very long delay, we received our supply of rifles from the Government, and all the difficulties of drill were renewed ; but we overcame them at last, and even settled the great question as to which was the best and most intelligible word of command for shouldering arms—“Shalloo humps !” as given by the sergeant, or “Shoolah hice !” as dictated by the corporal. We decided for “Shalloo humps,” and have stuck to it ever since.

OUR RECEPTION IN PUBLIC.

It is almost unnecessary to say that our formation has made an intense impression on the Grimgribber mind, and that the first day of our appearance in public was anxiously looked forward to. We had purposely kept ourselves unseen by any save our own immediate relatives, and the unveiling of the Great Mokanna never caused greater astonishment than did our first outburst, preceded by the drums and fifes of the United Order of Ancient Buffaloes. We filed out two by two from the lecture-hall, and marched away to a field in the neighbourhood, there to perform our evolutions. Grimgribber was present in its entirety—the richest and the poorest ; the men of peace and fighting ruffians from the beer-shops ; crinoline petticoats bulged against drab shorts and white stockings ; short clay pipes leered over cashmere shawls. A roar of delight burst forth as we turned out; we

grasped our rifles firmly, raised our heads, inflated our chests, and threw out our sixty left legs like one. It was a proud moment ; but we were made to feel that, after all, we were but mortal, and the check we received was given to us by a very small boy, who looked at our ranks with a calmly critical eye, and hit upon a fatal blot. “ Ah ! and ain’t they all of a size, neither !” he exclaimed. His remark was greeted with laughter ; for our tallest man is six feet one, and our shortest (whom we hide away in the centre of the company) is only five feet two. However, we bore up nobly ; we felt that even the great Duke of Wellington had been insulted in the streets ; and that we, who had not yet quite arrived at his eminence in military matters, ought to treat our aggressors with placidity and good humour. So we marched on to the field, and there went through all our evolutions with a steadiness and precision which entirely disarmed the boy, and changed him from a jeering ribald into an admiring spectator.

So it has been ever since ; we have made quiet and steady but efficient progress ; our ranks have been swelled by daily additions ; we are labouring away at our target practice long before the drowsy drabmen have moved from their pillows ; and I hope that at the next time of writing I shall have to record that a prize at the meeting of the National Rifle Association has been gained by one of the Grimgribber volunteers.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE OF THE GRIMGRIBBER RIFLE CORPS—OUR NEW CAPTAIN.

AUTUMN being, according to the almanacs, close at hand, and many members of our corps feeling bound to absent themselves from the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and to disport in sylvan or sea-side regions, I see some chance of being enabled to get an evening to myself to chronicle our doings since the earliest stages of our formation. Up to this time it has been impossible. I thought that when I had mastered the difficulties of drill my labour would be at an end ; that I might once a week lead or rather follow the regiment to our parade-ground ; that on the other six days my helmet might have been used as a hive for bees, or any other rustic and pacific receptacle ; that our bugler would “ sing truce ” as soon as the Saturday night cloud had lowered, and would not call us again to arms for the entire space of a week ; in fact, that so long as we were well up in our manual and platoon, and could put our men through the ordinary evolutions of company and battalion drill, more would not be required of us. I was mistaken—as I often am, and always to my cost. I daresay that, had we remained as we originally formed ourselves, I could have arranged things with Jack Heatly and his brother, and we should have

restricted our military ambition within proper limits ; but our corps increased so tremendously, so many fresh recruits came flocking to our standard, that we were obliged to form a second company, who, in their turn, elected their officers, and who chose for their captain a gentleman who, from his punctuality, exactitude, and strict attention to business, seems intended by Nature to supply the place of the late Duke of Wellington in these dominions. He was elected because he was a pleasant, strong, active young fellow, a good cricketer and oarsman, and such a maniac for dancing that he might have been a male Wili, or a victim to the bite of the tarantula. He was elected, and he thanked us. The next day on parade his true character burst forth ! He made us a speech, in which he said he had observed with regret that the discipline of the regiment was not such as could be wished. He was aware, he said (glancing at Jack Heatly, who was sitting on a camp-stool smoking a short pipe)—he was aware that we had been somewhat loosely looked after ; but that we might depend upon a strict supervision in future. You may be astonished to hear that there were certain men who applauded this harangue ; rash young men who talked about “ sticking to the thing,” and “ having no child’s play ;” but I myself trembled in my varnished gaiters. The next day Jack Heatly took a month’s leave of absence and went out of town, and the new captain, De Tite Strongbow, became our commander-in-chief. I shall never forget that day ! it was a Saturday, and we had just gone through a series of the most complicated evolutions in a pouring rain ; I was in the armoury divesting myself of my soaked uniform and rusted sword, and privately wondering why I had voluntarily exposed myself to so much inconvenience, when the senior sergeant of the regiment presented himself before me. A pleasant man is Sergeant Piper, with a jolly round rubicund face, a merry black eye, and a nose that attests the goodness of the port-wine at the

“ Sternsail and Tiller” on the Essex shore; which hotel he makes his summer residence. But dull was his appearance and solemn his expression as he made his military salute, and, merely saying “ From the captain, sir,” placed in my hands a large square printed paper. It was headed with the royal arms, and ran as follows :

GRIMGRIBBER RIFLE CORPS.

Arrangements for the week.

MONDAY.—Second squad drill, at 2 P.M., by Ensign Rivers.

TUESDAY.—Platoon drill by Ensign Rivers, 2 P.M.

WEDNESDAY.—First instruction in musketry, 7 P.M., by Captain Strongbow, assisted by Ensign Rivers.

THURSDAY.—Second squad drill by Ensign Rivers, 2 P.M.

FRIDAY.—Lecture on the dissection of the lock, by Captain Strongbow, assisted by Ensign Rivers, 4 P.M.

SATURDAY.—The regiment will march out for battalion drill on Squash Common. All the officers will attend. Gaiters *if wet*, but no greatcoats on any account.

Ensign Rivers is officer of the week; and any gentleman requiring any information on any point must apply to him.

DE TITE STRONGBOW,
Captain Commanding.

I, the present writer, am Ensign Rivers, whose name is so frequently mentioned in this abominable document! I rushed off to Strongbow’s rooms—he lives with his father, the eminent drysalter, but has a little outbuilding next the stables especially appropriated to his use. As I near this pavilion I heard strange sounds of stamping, mingled with thwacking of weapons, and cries of “ Ha, ha! had you there!” Entering, I found Strongbow stripped to his shirt, and busily engaged in belabouring the corporal, who, wooden as ever, solemnly defended himself with a single-stick. “ Hallo!” says Strongbow, “ come for more orders, Ensign?” I boil over, I object, I appeal—all in vain.

“What will the men say when they see their officers shirking duty?” Fruitlessly do I urge that I know nothing of the musketry instruction, or the dissection of the lock ; he gives me books—enormous volumes—which he bids me study. For a moment I waver in my allegiance ; I have a faint notion of requesting Her Majesty to be graciously pleased to accept my resignation of my commission ; but better thoughts prevail, and I go to work. I drill the second squad ; I pass a bright afternoon in the dull lecture-room of the Mechanics’ Institute, where the Map of Europe glares feebly at me from the damp-stained wall, and where the mullioned windows rattle dismally at the tramping of the recruits. Painfully and wearily do I go through the different evolutions, and tight and gordian-like is the knot into which I once or twice get myself and all the men, and have to summon the stiff corporal to my assistance, amidst furtive grins and whispered hints of “Try back.” But I did get through it at last, and next day accomplished the platoon drill, with directions, and in a manner that struck the corporal mute with horror. It has been malevolently remarked that the gentlemen who benefited by my instruction have since been recognisable principally by a habit of invariably carrying their rifles at full cock, and secondly by the slight omission of neglecting to withdraw their ramrods after loading with blank cartridge : a disadvantage which is apt to be unpleasantly felt by their comrades when they are placed as “a rear-rank standing.” But this is mere envy.

THE FIRST INSTRUCTION IN MUSKETRY.

It was so called in the Orders for the week, because it is rather a fine phrase. I believe, however, that the real technical unvarnished name of this performance is “Preliminary Drill for cleaning Arms.” A select class attended Captain Strongbow’s first instruction-lecture on the Wednes-

day evening ; but I shall better be able to give an account of their proceedings by adopting the dramatic form.

SCENE—*Captain Strongbow's rooms. Evening. Moderator-lamp alight in centre. Captain Strongbow at head of table; a long Enfield Rifle and two very ominous-looking red books by his side. Privates and sergeants of the corps gathered round him. Ensign Rivers standing immediately behind the Captain, where he has the least chance of being seen by him, and looking doubtfully on. The opening portion of the lecture has already been given.*

Captain Strongbow (proceeding). Now, gentlemen, I will once more run through what I have said, before questioning you. Now, gentlemen, the principal parts of the rifle are the stock and the barrel. (*He takes up rifle, and points to each part as he names it.*) The stock is divided into the nose-cap, the upper, middle, and lower bands, the swell, projections, lock-side, head, small, trigger-guard, trigger-plate, trigger, butt, and heel-plate. Once more ! (*He repeats all the names.*) Now, Mr. Lobjoit, what is this called ? (*Laying his hand on the nose-cap.*)

Lobjoit (who is a horsey man, and is always wishing we were cavalry). Nose-bag !

Capt. S. (disgusted). What do you say, Mr. Pruffle ?

Pruffle (a slow, middle-aged gentleman, who has entered the force with the sole object of learning how to defend his large family). Night-cap !

Capt. S. (more disgusted). Now, Mr. Skull, what is it ?

Skull (looking blankly at it through his spectacles). 'Pon my soul, I don't know !

Capt. S. (profoundly disgusted). Really, this is too bad ! Is there no gentleman present who can remember what this is called ?

Sergeant Fluke. Eh ? of course ; yes ! I can ! It's the

—the—the nose-cap, of course ! (*Aside, to next neighbour*)
Gad ! what a good shot !

Capt. S. (overjoyed). Very good ; very good indeed, Sergeant Fluke ! Ensign Rivers, I must trust to your honour not to prompt the gentlemen !

Ensign R. You may rely upon my doing nothing of the sort, sir ! (*N.B.—This is strictly correct, as Ensign Rivers knows rather less about it than anyone in the room.*)

Capt. S. Now, Sergeant Fluke, can you touch any other parts of the stock, and tell me their names ?

Fluke. Oh yes, of course ! (*Glibly.*) This is the barrel, and—

Capt. S. Parts of the stock, I said. The stock and the barrel are two distinct things.

Private J. Miller (the funny man of the corps—aside to his neighbour). Not at a cooper's or a brewer's ; there, the barrels constitute the stock !

Private Miller's neighbour (derisively). Oh ! ho ! ain't you funny !

Capt. S. Silence, gentlemen, pray ! Now, Sergeant Fluke ?

Fluke. Well, you know, this is the trigger, and this is the butt.

Capt. S. Which is the heel of the butt, Mr. Pruffle ?

Pruffle (touching the wrong end). This, sir.

Capt. S. No, no ! that's not the heel ; that's the toe !

Private Miller. Heel and toe ! I say, Pruffle, my pimpkin, which is the double-shuffle ?

Capt. S. Mr. Miller, I shall be compelled to call upon you to retire, if you persist in this buffoonery ! (*Private Miller makes a grimace of preternatural ugliness behind his neighbour's back, hums the Dead March in Saul, and crosses his hands to simulate a handcuffed deserter about to be shot.*)

Capt. S. Now, then, let us take the barrel.

Private Miller. Ah ! some of us have taken to that kindly.

Capt. S. Taken to what ?

Miller. To the barrel, sir ! Don't mind me. Go on !

Capt. S. (touching them). The muzzle, foresight, back or elevating sight, nipple, breech, breech-pin. Component parts of the breech-pin : face, tang, and breech nail-hole. What are the component parts of the breech-pin, Mr. Lobjoit ?

Lobjoit (rapidly). Face, fangs, and breeches-nails !

Capt. S. (in despair). This is dreadful ! I don't know what they'd say to you at Hythe !

Miller. He'll never go there, sir ; no more shall I. I say, Lobjoit, old boy, fancy their catching us playing at Hythe among the Sikhs.

Capt. S. (with dignity). I shall leave you out of the course, Mr. Miller ! (*Miller feigns to weep, and dry his eyes on the back of his hand.*) Now, once more, before I give up. The component parts of the back or elevating sight are the flanges, flap, slider, spring, and bed. Name them, Mr. Skull.

Skull (yawning). The principal part of the back-sight is the spring-bed.

Capt. S. (rising in disgust). No more at present !

(*Exeunt all but Strongbow, who sits up half the night studying the theory of trajectories.*)

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR BUGLE.

We had attended the Wimbledon meeting and the Chislehurst sham-fight, and had covered ourselves with glory at both ; but there was nothing to look forward to, and the perpetual platoon exercise and theoretical musketry instruction began to grow monotonous. The attendance

of men was a trifle falling off ; and I had suggested to Captain Strongbow that he should hurry on the preparation of our butts, and get us out to "judging distances" and firing with ball-cartridge as speedily as possible, when we received intimation of an approaching event which brought back all those who were beginning to lapse. When our numbers increased, and we grew too large for the Mechanics' Institute or Toddler's Yard, we looked about for some suitable drill-ground ; but there was no place to be had, and we were in despair, when the principal of Dulciss's Grimgribber College, hearing of our extremity, came forward in the kindest manner and placed the grounds of that establishment at our disposal. Dulciss's College is not, as you may probably imagine, a scholastic institution for young gentlemen ; it is a retreat, a refuge, a harbour for elderly gentlemen who have been broken and buffeted by the tempests of the world : a roadstead where they may ride safely at anchor for the remainder of their lives, comfortably housed and tended, and provided with a small income to supply themselves with necessaries. The only qualifications for candidates are, that they shall have been born in Grimgribber, shall have exceeded sixty years of age, and shall be without pecuniary resources. It is not difficult to find many who can fulfil these requirements, and the college is always full ; there, slowly pacing up and down the shady cloisters, or sitting sunning themselves on the worm-eaten old benches outside the porch, are the old fellows constantly to be seen, wearing their old black cloaks and queer shovel-hats as decreed by the founder, old Sir Thomas Dulciss, who died two hundred years ago. Attached to their prettily-terraced garden is a fine open meadow of several acres ; but the old collegians rarely stroll so far ; and when, under the permission of the principal, we held our first drill therein, none of them even came out to look at us, or took the trouble to inquire what we were doing. But a little later, on a fine spring day,

they came down in a knot and stood close by, watching our movements ; and as the words of command rang out, two or three of them, evidently old soldiers, straightened their poor bent backs and cocked their shovel-hats with the ghost of a military swagger ; and one, a very old man, hobbled back to the college, whence he returned with his black cloak thrown very much back, and a Waterloo medal gleaming on his brave old breast. When drill was over, we gave him a cheer that brought the fire into his dim eyes and the flush into his withered cheeks. Then Mrs. Principal, a benevolent old lady, and the two Miss Principals, very dashing girls, got in the habit of coming to watch us ; and the Miss Principals brought their friends, and the friends brought their cavaliers ; so that at last we used to exhibit before quite a bevy of spectators. One day Sir Gregory Dulciss, the present representative of the great family, was at the college on business ; and hearing of this, we formed on the terrace and saluted the great man, presenting arms to him as he came out. Sir Gregory was greatly touched at this, called it audibly a “dayvlish gratifying mark of ‘tention,” made us several bows modelled on those of his great friend, the late King George the Fourth, and hoped to meet us again. And a few days afterwards it was officially announced that Lady Dulciss intended presenting us with a silver bugle.

This it was that caused the new excitement ; this it was that brought up the few laggards, and caused the many who had hitherto been indefatigable to show even greater attention. It was determined that we should have a great day ; it was understood that a select company would come over from the Radishes, Sir Gregory’s house ; that the neighbourhood generally would attend ; and there was to be a tent with a cold collation for the corps, while the officers were invited to a champagne luncheon at the principal’s. Such furnishing-up of arms and accoutrements, such worrying of tailors and armourers, such private drill

among the men, and such minute inquiries among the officers as to the exact meaning of "recover swords!"

The day arrived and the hour. Headed by our band (their first appearance in public—rather nervous and shaky, a trifle agitated in the trombone, and a thought Punch-and-Judyish about the big drum, but still playing capitally), we marched through the village and into the field. The profane vulgar were not allowed to come inside, but they clustered thickly round the gates and swarmed about the palings like bees. Very good and searching were the remarks of the boys. "Walk up! walk up! just agoin' to begin!" shouts one, as the band passed. "Hooray for the Workus Corps!" says another, in allusion to our neat gray uniform. "Here's the pauper lunatics with their throats cut!" says a third, hinting at the red stripe on our collars. "Hallo, Bill," says a boy perched on the gate, "here's your huncle!" "I see him," responds Bill, a grimy-faced cynical young blacksmith—"I see him, *but I never takes no notice on him when he's with his Volunteers!*" And we passed on into the field. The white tent glimmered in the sun, and the ground was covered with company. The Dulciss people had brought some great acquaintances with them, country grandes in their carriages, dashing girls on horseback, and three or four young Guards' officers who came to scoff, and remained to prey—upon the luncheon. To pass this lot was the great ordeal. "Keep up, rear rank!" "Steady in the centre!" "Touch to the left, Jenkins; where the deuce are you going to?" The first and second companies went by splendidly. "Weally, not so bad, now, for quill-drivers and mechanics," says young Lithpson of the Bombardiers to Jack Gorget of the Body Guards, mauve. Jack nods approvingly; then, as the third company advances, headed by Tom Exlex, who was in the Spanish service under General Evans, and wears his Sebastian medal and San Fernando cross on his breast, Jack says earnestly,

though ungrammatically : " Hallo, what's this swell's decorations ? " " 'Pon my soul, I can't say," answers Lithpson ; " pwobably some reward for supewiour penmanship."

But we could afford to laugh even at such bitter sarcasm as this, so well were our evolutions performed, and so heartily were they applauded. Finally we were drawn up in line, and, amidst the cheers of the populace, Lady Dulciss advanced, followed by a portentous servant bearing the bugle on a cushion. Lady Dulciss is a very fine woman: a kind, benevolent, motherly-looking lady, and I've no doubt she made an excellent speech. It was intended for the entire regiment, but she delivered it in a confidential tone to Jack Heatly, who stood in front of her, and all we caught was " Britannia," " bugle," " Grimgribber," and " call to arms." Then she presented the bugle gracefully to Jack, who, in his intense nervousness, instantly dropped it, and she and he and Sir Gregory and the portentous footman all struggled for it on the ground. Then the band played " God save the Queen," the people cheered louder than ever, and we broke off and went in to lunch.

CHAPTER XIV

GRIMGRIBBER POSITION-DRILL.

IN the spring, according to Mr. Tennyson, the wanton lapwing gets himself another nest, a brighter iris changes on the burnished dove, and a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. These are unanswerable facts ; but here is another vernal incident, which, probably because Locksley Hall was written before the institution of the volunteer movement, has been unnoticed by the poet. In the spring the gentlemen attached to the various rifle corps, whose ardour has been chilled by the dreary winter, and whose time has been consumed in festivity, suddenly recall the fact that the eyes of their country are earnestly fixed on them for its defence. I am proud to say that we of the Grimgribbers were, theoretically, early in the field. No one who knows Captain De Tite Strongbow will imagine that he would have allowed us to be laggards. This indefatigable young man has never relaxed in his exertions. After the presentation of our bugle, recorded in the previous chapter, the ardour of the members thawed, and the general voice resolved itself into a-dieu ; that is to say, half the men went to the Continent, and the other half to the seaside. Before we broke up, Captain Strongbow called a battalion drill, when the prevalent disorder showed itself in an eruption of moustaches of a week's growth, and in the bulging of Continental Bradshaws from uniform pockets.

Strongbow noticed this, and, as I may express it in the language of the Wardour Street Elizabethan drama, "advantaged himself of the occasion." He put us through some of the most difficult and most perspiration-causing movements in the Field Exercise Book, and then, having formed us into a square and faced us inward, he solemnly addressed us. He said that he grieved to find a general disposition for a holiday, a disposition by no means in accordance with that solemn pledge which we had given when we voluntarily placed our services at her Majesty's disposal. He mildly hinted that anyone declining to attend parade or drill when summoned, was guilty of perjury in its grossest form ; and he asked us where we expected to go to? Through the dead silence which followed this appeal, the voice of the ill-conditioned Private J. Miller was heard, suggesting "Margate ;" but the ribaldry had effect on none but a few hardened scoffers. However, it was useless attempting to stop the threatened exodus ; and, after suggesting that those who visited the Continent should keep a sharp eye upon the foreign troops, "with whom they might be called upon to cross bayonets" (an idea which made a profound impression on Private Pruffle) ; and that they should take measures for becoming generally acquainted with the defensive works of such foreign fortresses as they might happen to come across ; and after recommending the stay-at-homes to attach themselves to the garrison of the seaport town where they might be staying, and pass an easy month of relaxation in attending three drills a day and perusing the Field Exercise Book in the evening, Captain Strongbow dismissed us with a benediction.

I do not believe that anyone, save Strongbow himself (who went first to Hythe and then to Shorncliffe, and passed the remainder of the autumn in endeavouring to improve the Armstrong gun), paid the smallest attention to the recommendation. Pruffle was seen with a wideawake hat

and a telescope on Southend pier. Lobjoit broke three colts and his own leg among the Yorkshire spinneys. Skull went to Worthing, and fell into a chronic state of sleep and seaweed. Private Miller, though he certainly visited Aldershot, only went for one night to assist at the military theatre in an amateur performance. We all went away and did cathedrals, and mountain passes, and ruined abbeys, and lay on beaches, and swam, and mooned, and enjoyed ourselves ; and by the time we returned to Grimgribber we had nearly forgotten the existence of our noble corps.

The Quakers were in ecstasies ; they knew it ; had they not prophesied it ? “ Friend, did I not tell thee ? ” etc. etc. All of which so roused the ire of De Tite Strongbow, that one day early in October, every dead-wall, tree, and post in Grimgribber blossomed with a blue-and-red announcement of a “ Parade on the Common on Saturday next.”

The day came and the hour, but not the men ; that is to say, there was not a very great muster. Parties of two and three came straggling up the lane, evidently intending merely to look on ; but they were spied by the vedettes posted by Strongbow at available situations, and immediately hailed by that energetic officer in stentorian tones and appealing phrases, all of which commenced : “ Hallo ! you sirs ! ” The persons addressed, recognising the voice, generally feigned total deafness, looked round in a vacant manner, and commenced a retreat ; but Strongbow was by their side before they had gone three paces, and by coaxing, wheedling, and bullying, induced most of them to proceed to the Common, so that at last two-thirds of our total number were present.

The day will be for ever remembered by the Grimgribber Volunteers ; on it they were initiated into the mysteries of rifle-shooting ; on it they laid the foundation of that system of skill which will, I doubt not, enable them to carry off the Queen’s prize and a few other trifles at the forthcoming

Wimbledon meeting ; on it they commenced the practice of a series of fearful gymnastics, compared with which the crank is a light and easy amusement, and the stone-excavating at Portland a pleasant pastime.

We had executed our "company-drill" in a singularly fanciful manner, remarkable chiefly for its divergence from prescribed rule. Long absence from parade had rendered us rusty and entirely oblivious of the meaning of the various commands. Thus, at the word "fours," the rear rank, instead of stepping smartly back, remained perfectly stationary, while a pleasant smile overspread the faces of most of its members at what they considered the extraordinary conduct of the two or three knowing ones who moved. In wheeling, the difference of opinion between the men was even more plainly exemplified ; for, while some clung close to the pivot man, others ambled away into the far distance, while the centre portion distributed their favours equally between the two, rushing sometimes to the one end, sometimes to the other; so that, instead of coming up "like a wall," as had so often been urged upon us, we serpentineed about in a very graceful festoon, and resembled nothing so much as the letter S. From my ensign's position in the rear I had watched Captain Strongbow's face during the performance of these manœuvres, and had every moment expected to see it overcloud ; but, to my astonishment, he remained perfectly calm, and, at the conclusion of the drill, he called us together, told us we should soon "pick up our movements," but that he had something of far greater importance in store for us. He here stated that it was most important that we should perfect ourselves in the practical portion of shooting ; that he had already prepared four sergeants who would undertake to instruct various sections of the corps ; and that on that evening the first meeting for position-drill would take place at his (Strongbow's) rooms. He hoped he should have a good

attendance, and concluded by telling us to bring our rifles, and not to eat too much dinner. What could that last caution mean? Alas, in a very few hours we knew its value!

OUR INSTRUCTION IN POSITION-DRILL.

SCENE—A barn attached to Captain Strongbow's house. Rather a bleak and cheerless place, with targets painted in black-and-white on the walls. A flaring lamp on a bracket lights only the end portion of the place. Some ten members of the corps, sergeants and privates, are lounging about, waiting to begin business. Captain Strongbow, by himself, aiming at a painted target with marvellous precision.

Enter Private Miller, smoking a short clay pipe; he stares round at the painted targets on the walls, and then shouts in a hoarse voice “Here y'ar! Now's your time! Three shots for sixpence! Try your fortune at the Little Vunder, gents! Pint o' nuts for him as hits the bull's-eye!”

Captain Strongbow (aghast). For Heaven's sake, stop this most discreditable noise, Mr. Miller!

Miller (in broken and melodramatic tones). Pardon me, noble captain, but the sight of these targets reminded me of the Greenwich fairs of early youth!

Strongbow. Pray, silence, Mr. Miller! It is impossible to get on if you indulge in buffoonery. Now, gentlemen. Fall in! (Sergeants and privates range themselves in line.) I am about to put you through position-drill; a course of instruction which habituates for the correct position for firing, and teaches you the natural connection between the HAND and the EYE. What are you smiling at, Mr. Skull?

Skull. Nothing, nothing; only Miller—

Strongbow. Miller; what?

Skull. Miller said that Mr. Mace in the last prize-fight taught Mr. Hurst the natural connection between the hand and the eye!

Strongbow. This is most disheartening ! Now ! There are three practices. The first word of command in the first practice is, "As a rear rank standing at three hundred yards, Ready." On the word "Ready," make a half-face to the right, feet at right angles, grasp the rifle firmly with the left hand, fingers of right hand behind the trigger-guard, body erect, left side perpendicular, left breast over left foot, shoulders——

Private Pruffle. Stop, sir, pray stop (*confusedly*). I can't recollect half that ! I've a short memory ! What did you say after making a face ?

(*Captain Strongbow repeats the instructions. All listen attentively, especially Private Miller, who places his hand behind his ear, bends forward, and assumes the attitude of the stage savage expecting the "pale-face."*)

Strongbow. Now, as a rear rank standing at three hundred yards, ready ! (*all move except Skull*). Did you hear me, Mr. Skull ? Ready !

Miller. Don't you hear, Skull ? Ready ! Present ! Fire ! (*kicks Mr. Skull just above the calf of his legs and nearly brings him to the ground*).

Strongbow. Try that again ! (*motion repeated several times*). Now, at the word "Present," without moving the body, head, eye, or hand in the slightest degree, throw the rifle smartly to the point of the right shoulder, at full extent of the left arm——

Lobjoit (a coarse person). Gammon !

Strongbow. What, sir ?

Lobjoit. Stuff, sire ! Can't fling a rifle about without moving your hands ! Don't believe in that !

Strongbow. Pray don't interrupt ; it's all correct ; done at Hythe ; perfectly possible. Now—P'sent !

(*Five men throw out their rifles bravely to the front, three bring up theirs slowly and sneakingly, two boldly support their elbows on their knees, and look as if they were performing a rather meritorious action than otherwise.*)

The position-drill proceeded, but it was very hard work. We speedily noticed that when Strongbow had any instruction to give, he invariably chose the time when we were at the "Present," *i.e.* when the strain upon our muscles in holding out the rifle was tremendous. After two seconds you would perceive the muzzle of the extended rifle begin to quiver in a very singular manner, then the body of the gentleman holding it would begin to rock about from the knees upwards, and finally, when he received the grateful command to "ease springs," he would give vent to an exclamation something between the ejaculation of a pavor, and the "characteristic 'hugh'" of Mr. Fenimore Cooper's Indians, and add, "'Gad, I'm nearly done up !"

The art of comporting oneself as a "rear rank standing" having been acquired, we were initiated into the mysteries expected from a "front rank kneeling;" and these gymnastics proved even yet more serious and invincible. For a gentleman of large frame, and accustomed to a well-stuffed easy-chair, to have to sit for five minutes on *his right heel*, and that alone, is by no means an easy matter; but the difficulty is considerably aggravated when he has to perform, while in this attitude, feats of manly strength in connection with throwing out a rifle to the full extent of his left arm. He has then to take aim at the target on the wall; and about this time, and just when he begins to puff dreadfully, he will hear a stentorian shout from the instructor: "What are you doing, sir? restrain your breathing! restrain your breathing, for Heaven's sake!" The unhappy man endeavours to do this, and to follow all the other directions given him in the slowest time, thus: "P'sent! to—oo—ooo! thre—ee—eee! fo—o—war! f—'ive!" until at the end, when he is called upon to spring smartly up to "Attention!" what with breath-holding and extra exertion, he resembles a boiled lobster in colour, and is shaking in every limb.

The judging-distance drill is an equally humorous but

considerably less fatiguing evolution. Its object is to enable the soldier to note the difference in the appearance of men at different distances : a happy result, which is apparently accomplished by sending several of the persons to be observed completely out of the range of any but the sharpest sight. Points are thrown out at certain allowed distances up to three hundred yards, and the men under instruction are told the distance, and made to observe the appearance of the "points." Then the "points" are sent out at unknown distances, and the men have to give their opinion of the distance at which these points are placed, the answers being noted in a register. We had some little difficulty at first in preventing the "points" from running away altogether, or slipping into the public-house when the instructor's back was turned. The guesses of some of the men were perfectly miraculous in their inaccuracy ; and it was observed that whenever Private Miller whispered his ideas on distance to the sergeant, that functionary would be convulsed, and rendered so oblivious of decorum as to attempt to write without any ink, and to make futile scratches on his register. It was afterwards discovered that the ill-conditioned Miller, instead of giving his ideas of distance, was whispering the latest riddle in the ears of the instructor. Even he, however, owned to the value of the judging-distance practice, declaring that after a few lessons he should be able to recognise, and consequently to avoid, his tailor, if he saw him at the other end of Pall Mall.

So we progressed through our difficulties, until we numbered some excellent shots among us. We are to be inspected by Colonel M'Murdo very shortly, to take part in the Wimbledon rifle contest and in the grand review, where we shall have plenty of opportunities of distinguishing ourselves. I shall not fail to chronicle our movements.

CHAPTER XV

WARLIKE WIMBLEDON.

HE was a discontented man, the omnibus-driver, and he said generally that he didn't like it. Volunteers might be good, he said, and they mightn't—leastways, what noise they made, frightening horses with bangin' bands and such-like, wasn't much 'count : lawyers they was, and clurks, and ribbing-coves (understood by present writer to be drapers' assistants), and such-like. Rifle-matches—ah ! well, he'd heard tell, but hadn't seen much of that game, further than the Red House at Battersea, and for nuts at Greenwich Fair. If they was any good—as men—do you see ? they'd come up to Copenhagen House, or the Brecknock, at Easter Monday, and have a back-fall with those parties that came up from Devonshire and the North. Volunteers ! he thought he knew a young man in the public line not far from Tottenham, which—he was all fair and 'bove-board—which it was at Wood Green, his name being Obble, what could show them Volunteers *something* at knurr-and-spell : let 'em come with their fur-caps and all their fandangoes ! Here he grew defiant, and elbowed me fiercely with his whip-arm. The whole affair was bellicose. I was on a Waterloo omnibus, going to the Waterloo station on my way to Wimbledon, then under martial law ; and seeing that the taint had got into the driver's blood, and fearing

lest he should kick me with his bluchers, I remained silent, and never opened my mouth until I asked for my railway-ticket.

But when I had curled into my corner in the railway-carriage, and had taken stock of the arms, accoutrements, and general appearance of the three privates and the ensign who went down with me, and had weaned my ears from drinking in the pompous rhetoric of the other occupant of our compartment, a gentleman of very imposing appearance, to whom, according to his own account, Wimbledon was indebted for its tenure of existence, I began to ponder over the omnibus-driver's remarks ; and his reminiscences of Battersea Red House, and the nuts at Greenwich Fair, reminded me of what my idea of a rifle-match was, as embodied in the last one in which I took part. Sixteen years, I thought, have passed since I went down, rifle in hand, to a long strip of meadow bordering the Rhine, and paid my money to become a competitor at the Düsselberg Schützen Fest. A pretty quiet spot, flanked on one side by other meadows filled with large-uddered mild-eyed cows, whose bells tinkled pleasantly in the ears of the competitors, and on the other by the rapid-rushing river. There were some half-dozen painted wooden targets, arranged on the Swiss system ; while a little distance apart, on the top of a high pole, towered a popinjay, to hit which was the great event of the day. The spectators of the friendly contest, varying, according to the time of day, from one to three hundred, were all townspeople well known to the marksmen and to each other, and occupied their time either in coming to the firing-posts and giving utterly vague and incoherent advice to their favourites, or in examining with deep reverence the prizes, consisting of two silver-mounted biergläser, and a few electrotyped Maltese crosses bearing the name of the Schützen Fest and the date, one of which I saw the other day in a dressing-table drawer, with a few old

letters, an odd glove or two, a hacked razor-strop, a partially obliterated daguerreotype, and such-like lumber. I don't think we shot well ; I know that an enlightened public would not have liked our appearance, and that General Hay would have objected to our attitudes, which were anything but Hythe-position. I am certain that the merest tyro of a recruit would have scorned our rifles, which required several seconds' notice before they went off ; and I have no doubt that we were supremely ridiculous ; but I am equally certain that we were undeniably happy. The great charm, I thought, of such a meeting as that which I am recalling and that to which I am going, is its quiet—the change from the bustle and roar of ordinary life to the calm tranquillity, the noiseless serenity, of open country space. If I felt it then, when merely straying from the monastic seclusion of my university, how shall I enjoy it now, when flying from the ceaseless hum of London ! How pleasant will be the open heath, dotted here and there with rifle-ranges and marksmen, the freedom from bustle and noise, the picturesque surroundings, the fresh turf, the elastic air, the—PUTNEY ! The voice of the guard announcing my destination breaks upon my reverie. I jump out of the carriage, and, ascending the steps of the station, I emerge,

Into Pandemonium. Into a roaring, raving, shouting crowd ; into a combination of the road to the Derby and Aldershot Heath on a field-day in June ; for you have every component part of both. Enormous rolling clouds of dust, a heterogeneous mass of carriages, open and shut, some regularly licensed, others improvised for the occasion and bearing a paper permit obtained impromptu from Somerset House and gummed on to the panels ; the drivers of the vehicles shouting, shrieking, touting, beckoning, and gesticulating with whips, carneying weak-minded and hustling feeble-bodied persons into becoming passengers ; gipsies, beggars ; imps, with the bronze of the country on their faces and the

assurance of London in their address, vending cigar-lights, showing the way, turning "cart-wheels," and being generally obstructive ; volunteer officers clanking a good deal, and volunteer privates unbuttoning their tunics and showing more shirt-front than is provided for in the regulations ; public-houses crammed and overflowing into the road with drink-seeking wayfarers ; station-porters giving up all idea of business, and flitting from one knot of people to the other, sipping here, sporting there, like butterflies in velveteen. The inhabitants of Putney evidently divided into two sections—the natives, who gathered together in grinning masses, who chuckled fat-headedly, and sniggered, and saw a grand opportunity for shirking work and passing the entire day in vacant staring ; and the affiliated, acclimatised, or naturalised Putneians, who are grubs in the City from nine till five, and butterflies at Putney for the remaining portion of their lives, and whose wives and daughters looked upon the whole thing as "low," and glared balefully at us from their plate-glass windows. I managed to survive even their scowls, and installed myself as one of a cheerful though perspiring party of seven, in a carriage intended to hold four (and looking, in its check-chintz lining, as though it had come out in its dressing-gown), which, after five minutes' dalliance with a knotted whip, a very flea-bitten gray horse was persuaded to drag up the hill towards the camp.

As we neared the spot, I was reminded of my friend the omnibus-driver's observations anent Greenwich Fair and shooting for nuts ; for I am bound to say that, in the course of a long and varied experience, I never saw anything so like a fair as the Wimbledon camp seen from the outside. A wooden railing, shabby enough in itself, and rendered more shabby by the torn and ragged bills sticking to it, surrounds the camp ; from within float sounds of distant bands, popping rifles, and cheering populace ; while immediately outside stands that salvage of nothing-doing, lounging, thieving, drunken

scum invariably to be found in the immediate vicinity of all fairs. On first entering, the same idea prevailed, for there were a few miserable little booths, in front of which one expected to see painted canvases of the giantess, the armadillo, and the tiger that devoured the Indian on horseback. But as I progressed up the ground, and passed wonderingly through the long line of tents, this notion vanished entirely, and instead of being in a fair, I found myself in a very village of canvas. An hour's stroll showed me that this village was a town. The early Australian gold-diggers had their canvas town ; and here we had ours, within a twenty minutes' run from London. Canvas Town, by all means ! for in what town could you find more completeness, or in what town would you require more than is here to your hand ? For in the course of my survey I have lighted upon a newspaper-office (*Volunteer Service Gazette*), a police-station, a post-office with the hours of the arrival and despatch of mails duly placarded outside, a telegraph-office with temporary wires communicating with—everywhere, whence you could send the name of the winner of the Queen's Prize to your friend Ryot in the indigo trade at Suez, or utterly depress Sneesh of M'Mull, yachting off Malta, with the tidings that the Scotch were beaten in the International Match ; many taverns and restaurants ; many gunsmiths' and shops (tents) for kindred matters ; a club, where four copies of *The Times* are to be found, with other journals in proportion, and from which issuing the sound of a grand piano and a musical voice, proved that a great step in advance had been made in club matters, and that lady members were admitted. Farther on, here and there, I found public boards whereon printed matters affecting the common weal might be—and were—read ; “Lost” and “Found” (rare the latter) notices, shooting-scores for great prizes, and other documents, very like the inscriptions on pounds and such-like country-town institutions. I am not much of a reckoner in such matters, but

from my observation I should imagine that Canvas Town covers many acres ; it is duly fenced-off from the outlying grounds, and it has streets and a square regularly arranged. In what might be called the market-place, at the back of what I choose to consider the town-hall (which, to vulgar minds, is the "Grand Stand"), I find the public clock, a monster Bennet, and a little farther off the public thermometer, which tells you everything scientific which you cannot possibly want to know, and which, while being, I understand, excessively useful to the erudite, is so exact and so complicated, that even my very cursory inspection of it sends me away headachey and discomfited.

The whole of this city, which teems with an ever-busy, running, pushing, shouting, gun-carrying, band-playing, red, green, gray, and brown population, is under canvas, save in a few instances where canvas is supplemented by wood. Far and away, right and left, stretch the long lines of tents, looking somewhat ghostly, even in the bright afternoon sun, and suggesting a very spectral appearance at night. The tents are of two shapes—some like Brobdingnagian dishes of blancmange, others like inverted monster pegtops without the pegs. Strolling on, I come upon a little oasis of painted brick, a small house belonging to the miller, whose mill looks like a huge genie with arms outspread, protecting the phantom-village he has called into existence—a little house which seemed quite ashamed of its conventional appearance, and had done its best to hide it by having tents in its garden and right up to its very doorstep ; and as I skirt the garden I become aware of something couchant in the grass —something which I imagine at first to be a snake, but which turns out to be nothing more than a harmless policeman off duty, who is lying supine on his back looking up at the sky, rural, happy, contemplative—as though there were no such things as bad "beats" or Irish navvies with homicidal tendencies. Recalled to sublunary matters by

my approach, he sits up and gives me good-day ; and sitting down beside him, I enter into conversation, find him a very pleasant fellow, and learn from him, amongst other things, that Canvas Town has a place for public worship, divine service being performed on Sunday in the Grand Stand, to a large and attentive congregation, and a school—where, however, the “instructors” are, to a man, from Hythe.

On leaving my policeman, I strayed pleasantly into the arms of some of my old companions the Grimgribber Rifles, and who received me with the greatest cordiality. From them I learnt that the most interesting feature in Wimbledon life was the camp-fire and its gathering, which was decidedly a thing to be seen. It sounded well—a camp-fire, with plenty of punch, and singing, and ladies’ company, to be preceded by a dinner with my old corps, and to be concluded with a dog-cart drive to London—so I agreed to stop ; and very glad I am I determined on this arrangement, for the camp-fire was the end which crowned the day’s work, and crowned it royally.

After a capital dinner, we moved out about nine o’clock to the “meeting,” which was held in a large open space, a circle, surrounded by a rising mound, forming a perfectly natural amphitheatre. In the middle of the circle blazed a large fire of dried heather ; on the mound—some on chairs (ladies these mostly), some couchant at full length, some squatting on their hams like Indians at a council-fire—sat a motley assemblage, composed of volunteers in all uniforms and from all counties, natives of Wimbledon, neither pure nor simple, gaping people from town, and people from the neighbourhood : the ladies muffled in pretty capes and fantastic hoods and ravishing yachting-jackets ; the gentlemen in that stern simplicity of white neckcloth and black everything else, which gives such picturesque dignity to the dining Briton. Nor was Scotland Yard without its representatives. Not possessing the

advantages enjoyed by caricaturists, I have never seen a policeman at supper in my kitchen, and consequently have never been a spectator of that hilarity to which the "force" abandons itself when it is off duty. Certainly, at Wimbledon the police never entirely forgot that they were not as other men ; they smiled, they spoke, they sang ; but I imagine the singer only let out his stock by one hole to suffer his high C to have scope, and that in no moment of delight did any one of them cease to give an occasional slap at his coat-tails, to assure himself that his truncheon had not been purloined. But it was very jolly. When we arrived (and we had scented the burning heather and the tobacco a quarter of a mile off), Lord Bowling was just finishing a comic song, which, so far as I could make out, was about some transaction in which a Jew and some poached eggs were equally implicated ; and when the roar of applause which followed the termination died away, Lord Echo, who was apparently the president of the evening, called upon "A 395 ;" and that "vigilant officer," as, no doubt, he has been often described in print, set to work with a will, and piped us a sentimental ditty with a good voice and much real feeling. While he sang I looked round me in wonder. Rembrandtish, or rather more after the wild dash of Salvator Rosa, was the scene : in front the fitful glare of the fire lighting up now, leaving in dusk then, uniforms of various sombre hues, relieved here and there with a sharp bit of scarlet stocking, the top of which, surrounded by the dark knickerbocker, glowed like a fire in a grate ; incandescent tips of cigars dotting the black background, illumined now and then in a little space by a vesuvian match ; farther still, the long, weird, gaunt common, stunted, blank, and dreary, with a ghostly fringe of waning spectral tents. This was a quiet night. "Not one of our great meetings," said a Victoria Rifle to me ; and yet there must have been between three and four hundred people present. Close by me is a

family party, evidently from one of the houses hard by, consisting of papa, bland and full of port-wine ; mamma, half-sedate, half-anxious ; two noble sons of sixteen and fifteen, braving papa in the matter of tobacco, and entirely absorbed therein ; some very pretty daughters and dining friends. As Policeman A 395 warbles forth his ditty, one pretty daughter (the auburn-haired daughter) and one dining friend (with the shaved face and the heavy Austrian moustache) want "to see better"—happy A 395, to be the attraction of so much curiosity!—so they gradually edge off until they are quite by themselves, and then they no doubt see admirably, for the gentleman looks down at the lady, and the lady looks down at the turf and draws figures on it with her parasol. Never mind, A 395 ; you are not the first person by a good many who has stood innocent godfather to this kind of business ; and you quiver so nicely and make such a prolonged shake on the last note of your song, that you deserve all the applause and the glass of punch bestowed on you, as you make a stiff bow and retire.

Who next, my Lord Echo? Who next? Who but Harrison? And so soon as the name is heard, the welkin (what is the welkin? you don't know ! I don't ! but it's a capital phrase), the welkin rings with shouts of delight. A prime favourite, Harrison, evidently. Doubtless a buffo-singer, short, fat, broad, genial, and jolly, as all comic men should be. No! Harrison is a slim handsome fellow of middle height, with a bright eye, a mellow voice, and a lithe agile figure. "Capital fellow," says the man of the Victorias next to me ; "tremendous favourite here ; sings like a lark, talks like a book, and starts next week to join his regiment in India." Bravo, Harrison! Well sung, my young friend! After Harrison has sung his song, he gives us (being loudly encored) an imitation of a "stump oration," which, truth to tell, is a dull affair. At its conclusion, to

our astonishment. Lord Echo calls upon General M'Mortar for a song. We think it is a joke, and have no idea that the gallant Inspector is among us. But lo ! like the ghost of Banquo, the well-known form of General M'Mortar rises amidst the smoke, and the well-known voice commences. Not a song ! no, a speech ! The old story of volunteers being descended from those old English bowmen (who have done such enormous service to writers and speakers on this matter), and of pluck, and valour, and of their being called upon to resist an enemy ; and, in fact, a choice selection from the speeches which the good general has delivered at inspections for the last three years. This is a damper ! Men begin to scuffle off; ladies shiver and clasp their cloaks tighter round them : the evening is evidently finished—thanks to General M'Mortar.

Off we go then, making towards the road as best we may : one minute's halt at the Grimgrubber tent, for what is known as a "nip ;" and then home in my friend's dog-cart, with a very happy reminiscence of the day's loitering and the night's camp-fire.

CHAPTER XVI.

KENSAL GREEN.

IN a novel by M. Paul de Kock, it is stated that the principal promenades of the English people take place in cemeteries, which are congenial places of resort to a nation suffering from the spleen. So far as I, an unit in the nation, am concerned, the French author's assertion is to some extent correct. I do not exactly know what the spleen is, and consequently I may be suffering from it unconsciously ; but, whatever may be the motive power, I have a taste for wandering in churchyards, and looking at those houses which the gravemaker builds, and which “last till doomsday.” Both in Germany and in England there is a certain due sense of solemnity about the churchyard ; walking in them, one feels with the man of Uz, that “there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together ; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.” They are essentially places for meditation and reflection, and as an antidote against an overweening sense of worldliness, I would back an afternoon spent in one of certain churchyards which I know—say, haphazard, Hendon, Stoke-Pogis, Stratford-on-Avon—against most of the trenchant homilies I have listened to. As old Thoresby the antiquarian says : “One serious walk

over a churchyard might make a man mortified to the world, to consider how many he treads upon who once lived in fashion and repute, but are now quite forgot. Imagine you saw your bones tumbled out of your graves as they are like shortly to be, and men handling your skulls, and inquiring : ‘Whose is this ?’ Tell me of what account will the world be then ?”

Of the English cemetery, however, I knew nothing, until, on a blazing July afternoon, I set out for Kensal Green.

Just as a town has its suburbs, an army its pioneers, and a village its outskirts, so the great cemetery of Kensal Green (dedicated appropriately enough to All Souls) makes its vicinity felt some time before it is actually in sight. Once past the turnpike on the road, though yet a good half-mile from the nearest entrance, you are struck with certain signs and tokens which speak significantly of the region. The building to the right, just by the turn in the road, is an establishment for the sale of tombstones, and that monotonous grinding sound, which so grates on the ear, is occasioned by the polishing or the smoothing of the surface of a huge slab, destined to be sacred to the memory of some person unknown, who is not impossibly at this moment alive and well. As you trudge along, and before you have done speculating how often the muddy canal to your left has been compared to the Styx, and whether a certain yard or field, also on the left, has been made a receptacle for carts and waggons which had departed this life, solely because of its locality ; and, if not, why so many broken-up vehicles are there congregated, you come to more tombstone establishments. Statuary and mason are inscribed after the dealers’ names on the façade, but this is a mere euphuistic fencing with the subject. The only statuary sold is for the graveyard ; the only masonry dealt in is for the crypt or mausoleum. Past the snug-looking Plough Inn, at the old-

fashioned entrance to which stands an empty hearse, and at the windows whereof several professional gentlemen, arrayed in solemn black, are indulging in bibulous refreshment ; past an elaborate monument on which mortuary emblems are crowded in great profusion—an hour-glass surmounting two dead lions, and a couple of weeping females supporting an affecting tablet, whereon a trade advertisement is inscribed ; past several shops where even the pictorial literature assumes a mournful character, the nearest approach to humour being a “ladder of matrimony,” which commences with “hope,” and ends in “despair,” such end being typified by the cheerful emblem of a foundering ship ; past the shop-window full of white and yellow immortelles, which look like so many wedding-rings from the fingers of departed Brobdingnagians ; and, duly armed with a courteous letter from the secretary of the company, I present myself through the arched entrance to the cemetery.

Having conferred with the pleasant-looking rubicund gatekeeper, an evidently cheerful philosopher, who supplies me with an Illustrated Guide to Kensal Green Cemetery, and requests me to wait until the clerk is disengaged, I stroll into the garden and sit down. A Frenchman, with wife and family, are chattering on the adjoining seat, eating bon-bons, and gazing round the cemetery with a critical air, as comparing it with cemeteries of their own land. It is some time before I see any other visitors, and it may be worth stating that during the whole time I was in the cemetery (some hours) I met with only one person in mourning ; a widow, whose scarlet petticoat, I may be excused for mentioning, contrasted gracefully with her looped-up black dress, making a tasteful setting to a remarkably neat pair of feet. Three or four damsels from the neighbourhood, a tender couple apparently on the first round of the ladder of matrimony aforesaid, a couple of carriages with provincial occupants, and one or two people who were selecting ground, were, besides

the gardeners and servants employed by the company, my only fellow-explorers on the day I devoted to the city of the dead. "The clerk" was not, as I hastily concluded, a clerk of the works, a sort of overseer who looked after the persons employed, and kept the books of the company, but the severe ecclesiastical official who reads the responses, and says "Amen!" after the clergyman. His engagement was of course a funeral, or, as he termed it, when politely apologising for having kept me waiting, "an interment." Both these words mean the same thing, of course; but as I have remarked that undertakers invariably use the latter, I have long inferred that its enunciation is, in some inexplicable way, considered to be more palatable to survivors. Be this as it may, an interment had detained the clerk, whose name I have not the pleasure of knowing, but whom I mentally christened Mr. Dawe. He was a little man, dressed in black, with the conventional white tie, and his daily occupation had left its trace both upon his bearing and his voice. The one was sympathetic, and the other soft, and his general demeanour was that of sparing your feelings. Both communicative and intelligent, he never wearied, either of ministering to my inquisitiveness, or accompanying me on my rounds, but he was consistent throughout, and furnished me with statistics in a manner which impressively said all flesh is grass. The conservatory to the right, Mr. Dawe informs me, has only been in existence this year, and was started by the cemetery company, to supply an increasing demand for flowers on graves: a demand which the adjacent nursery gardeners were not always able to meet. Would I like to see the inside of it?

Not greatly different from other buildings of the same character; flowers, blooming in their several pots, and the usual paraphernalia of a greenhouse lying about. Each of these plants is destined to be transferred to a grave; but as the end for which they are tended and nurtured is their

only speciality, we leave the greenhouse, and proceed up the centre road. Those wooden "sleepers" reared against the wall are of seasoned wood, and are used during the formation of earthworks and in building brick graves. On our way to the chapel, disturbed neither by the constant whizzing past of trains on the divers lines adjacent, nor by the incessant "Crack, crack!" from the riflemen at practice on Wormwood Scrubs, Mr. Dawe informs me that the cemetery is vested in a joint-stock company of proprietors; that it has been in existence more than thirty years; and that from fifty to sixty thousand persons are interred herein. This he considers a low estimate, as there are some eighteen thousand graves, and an average of three or four bodies in each. How many burials does he consider the rule per week? Perhaps seven a day in summer, and eight in winter; he has known as many as twelve in one winter's day, but that was exceptional. No, this cemetery never inters on Sundays. It used to do so formerly, but has given the practice up for years; the Roman Catholic one adjoining it to the west does, and also, he believes, the one at Willesden; and if I should ever attend the chapel of Lock Hospital, and hear of, or see, irreverent burial processions passing on the road, perhaps I will remember that they are not coming here, but to one of the two grounds adjacent.

What is the size of the cemetery? Well, between seventy and eighty acres. Forty-seven acres are at present in actual use, but thirty additional acres have been recently consecrated, the party-wall having just been taken down; and workmen are now employed in making roads and laying out the ground. A portion of the original forty-seven acres is unconsecrated, and appropriated to dissenters. This portion has its separate chapel and catacombs; and a dissenting minister, provided by the company, attends the funerals therein. Any other minister preferred by the friends of the deceased is permitted to officiate, and, if

desired, the body may be consigned to earth without any ceremony. Perhaps I have read in the papers of the Indian princess brought here the other day, and whose remains some of her Sikh servants wished to have burnt? Well, this was a case in point. The coffin was placed in the dissenters' catacomb, and, though a speech was delivered which Mr. Dawe, though not speaking the Sikh tongue, believes to have been on the virtues of the deceased, the burial is described in the company's registry-book by the words "no ceremony." It was a large funeral, with many carriages. No, not the largest he had seen; perhaps one of them; but then he had only been here a few months, and it is in place of the superintendent, who is away, that he is acting as my guide. The most numerously-attended interment coming under his own observation was that of the secretary to the Young Men's Christian Association; and the next that of Sir Cresswell Cresswell, who lies under the plain slab before us. There has not been time to procure a monument, explains Mr. Dawe; but you will be interested to learn, sir, that the poor gentleman came up here and selected that bit of ground for himself, not ten days before he met with the accident from the effects of which he died. What constitutes a dissenter in the eyes of the company? Well, nobody can be buried in consecrated ground unless the "Committal Service" is read by a clergyman of the Church of England. That is the only stipulation, and other rites may be, and sometimes are, previously performed elsewhere. The company has nothing to do with that: only, if the Church Service be objected to, the burial must be in the dissenters' or unconsecrated portion of the cemetery. Are there any quaint out-of-the-way epitaphs or inscriptions on any of the tombs? No, Mr. Dawe does not know of one. You see, nothing can be inscribed upon any tomb until it has been submitted to, and approved by, a sub-committee of the directors, which meets every month;

and any ludicrous or unseemly proposition would be at once refused. Does he know of many instances in which it has been fruitlessly attempted to put questionable inscriptions? Of none; and he believes that an out-of-the-way country churchyard might be found which contains more of these curiosities of bad taste than have ever been "even tried on" since the formation of the cemetery. This Mr. Dawe attributes to the spread of education, and to the cemetery being devoted principally to the well-to-do classes. Nothing would have tempted me to shake a standard of taste shared in by so many people besides this worthy clerk; so, agreeing that the possession of money invariably elevates the mind and purifies the heart, I asked in all reverence which was considered the most costly tomb in the grounds? I was taken to a sort of temple in gray marble, the peculiarity of which is, as I was begged to observe, that on entry you go up a step instead of down one, and the graceful shape and the polished sides of which are decidedly handsome and a little heathenish.

This, I was told, cost some three thousand pounds, and I uncovered my head accordingly. The one nearly opposite, not yet finished, would come to about two thousand pounds; while the foundations just laid down were for a vault to hold twelve people, and to cost more than a thousand pounds. What is the bricked pit in the centre for—the coffins? Oh dear no! A grating would be placed over that, and would form the flooring of the vault, while the coffins would be ranged round the walls at the sides. Did I observe the thickness of the masonry? Well, this pit was designed to receive the ashes of the people interred, if—say a thousand years hence—these walls should crumble and decay. It was being built by a gentleman for himself and family, who, when in town, takes the deepest interest in the work, coming here every day to see how the building progresses. No time to meditate upon the strangeness of this idiosyn-

crasy, for we have arrived at the chapel, and Mr. Dawe hands me over to another official, while he transacts some business with a fat and jolly-looking couple who "want to look at a bit of ground." Again, as when in the conservatory, a singular feeling arises as to the speciality of the building. As in every other instance flowers are associated with joy and life, so in every other sacred edifice bridals and christenings, with their attendant prayers, and hopes and fears, are as germane as the last rites to the dead. But there is no altar here wherefrom to pronounce the marriage blessing, no font round which parents and friends have clustered, and the double row of seats at each side have been used by mourners, professed or real, but by mourners only. It needs no guide to explain the use of the black trestles in the centre of the building. Some thousands of coffins have probably rested on them, though they are only used for the burials in the grounds. For the coffins deposited in the catacombs below, these trestles are not required. They are placed on a hydraulic press, and lowered through the floor by machinery, as the clergyman reads the service.

We go down by a stone staircase, and I am speedily in the centre of a wide avenue, out of which branch other avenues; and on stone shelves on each side of these rest coffins. This is Catacomb B. Catacomb A is away from the chapel, and has long been filled. This present catacomb has room for five thousand bodies, and my companion (who has been custodian of the vaults for the last thirty years) considers it about half full. I am therefore in a village below ground, of some two thousand five hundred dead inhabitants, and I can (not without reproaching myself for the incongruity) compare it to nothing but a huge wine-cellars. The empty vaults are precisely like large bins, and were it not for the constant gleams of daylight from the numerous ventilating shafts, my guide with his candle would

seem to be one of those astute cellar-men who invariably appear to return from the darkest corners with a choicer and a choicer wine. The never altogether absent daylight destroys this illusion, and I proceed to examine the coffins around me. They are, as a rule, each in a separate compartment, some walled up with stone, others having an iron gate and lock and key, others with small windows in the stone; others, again, are on a sort of public shelf on the top. The private vaults are fitted up, some with iron bars for the coffins to rest on, others with open shelves, so that their entire length can be seen. The price of a whole vault, holding twenty coffins, is, I learn, one hundred and ninety-nine pounds; of one private compartment, fourteen pounds; the cost of interment in a public vault is four guineas; each of these sums being exclusive of burial fees, and an increased rate of charges being demanded when the coffin is of extra size. Rather oppressed with the grim regularity with which every one of these arrangements is systematised, I am not sorry to ascend the stairs, and ask my companion how he would find a particular coffin buried say twenty years before. By its number—and he shows me a little book wherein all these matters are methodically set down, and in which, in case of burials out of doors, under the head of “remarks”—I find the locality of each grave thus described: “Fifteen feet west of Tompkins;” or, “three feet south of Jones,” as the case may be. “We have so many of the same name,” exclaims the catacomb keeper, “that we should never find them unless the whole place were planned out into squares and numbers.” Here Mr. Dawe joins us, and I ask to be taken to the dissenters’ catacomb, that I may see for myself the last resting-place of the poor woman whose ashes have been squabbled over, and written on by Sikh and Christian. On the way, I inquire how many men are employed at the cemetery? Mr. Dawe has difficulty in saying, as so many labourers are

occasionally employed. Night watchman? Oh yes, there is a night watchman, who is armed with a gun, which he fires every night at ten. He is accompanied by a faithful dog, and patrols the cemetery the whole of the night. No, he has no particular beat. Formerly, he had to be at the entrance to each catacomb (they are situated at the two extremities of the grounds) at stated hours during the night, and "tell-tales" were provided, to test his punctuality, but these have not been used for many years. The directors having perfect confidence in their servant, think it better that he should be left free, than by compelling him to be at one place at a particular time, enable possible depredators to make their calculations accordingly.

No, he is not aware of any attempt ever having been made to rob the cemetery. It is thoroughly known that an armed man patrols throughout the night, and it is not known where he is likely to be. The lead on the roof of the catacombs and chapels is of many hundred pounds' value, and the marble of many of the statues and tombs is very costly; but these things are heavy to move, and Mr. Dawe thinks the existing arrangements a sufficient protection against robbery. When the wall was being taken down, and the recently consecrated thirty acres added, two extra men were employed as sentries to guard that point, but it is no longer a weak one, and the original watchman is once more held to be sufficient. There are two gate-keepers, several gardeners, a messenger, who takes a duplicate "sexton's book" and other papers to the London office every day, and others. Two of the gardeners and this messenger are sworn constables, and on Sundays assume a policeman's dress and keep order among the visitors. The graves are not dug by servants of the company, but by contract with one of the tombstone-makers, whose house I passed outside. This end of the centre walk is not occupied near the gravel, because it is only let on the condition of the lessee

spending not less than from two to three hundred pounds on a monument, and such people have hitherto preferred to be at the end nearest the chapel. The “monumental chambers” above the catacombs are devoted to tablets containing the names and descriptions of many of the people buried below. Yes, there is an extra charge of a guinea a foot for all space thus occupied. (As we walk their length, I discern more than one piece of mortuary work having a cramped look, as if the statuary had been restricted in his scope. Again I had to reproach myself for an incongruous simile, but the “guinea a foot” and the closely-covered walls reminded me strangely of advertisement charges, and of the bill-stickers’ hoardings which deface our streets.) I stoop to look for the inscription on an elaborate piece of sculpture occupying a prominent position at one end of the chamber, and am told it is not put there in memory of anyone. “Ordered by a lady, sir, to commemorate the death of a male relative, but she died before it was finished, and her heirs declining to take it, it was thrown on the sculptor’s hands, and as he happened to be one of our directors, he had it brought here” (perhaps as a not unlikely place to attract a purchaser), “and now *he’s* dead ; so here it’s likely to remain.” On admiring the foliage in the grounds, I am told that all trees are, from their rain-droppings, injurious to tombs, and that the weeping willow is the most detrimental of all ; but for this, there would be many more planted ; but, notwithstanding this drawback, many people like the vicinity of the last-named tree. What is that little bed of fine soil, destitute of shrub or plant, and decked out with empty cups and saucers, irrelevant and misplaced ? A grave. The cups are for choice flowers, the bed is for rare plants ; but the heirs of its occupier are abroad, so it remains bald and shabby-looking, without even its natural covering of turf. Such cases are not uncommon, says Mr. Dawe : all melancholy

enthusiasm at the funeral ; flowers ordered and the company engaged to keep them in order, at the regulation charge of a guinea a year. Two years generally find enthusiasm cooled down, and the guinea discontinued. For ten guineas the company undertake to keep up the flowers for ever ; and I agree with Mr. Dawe, that, the weakness of human nature considered, this is the best plan. The price for merely turfing is half-a-crown a year, or four guineas in perpetuity : the contract for flowers being only ten times the annual subscription, that for turf more than thirty times. This, however, is explained by the fact that flowers add to the general beauty of the cemetery, and that it is the interest of the directors, even at a slight pecuniary sacrifice, to encourage their growth.

But here are the dissenters' chapel and catacombs. Both somewhat dingier and smaller than the other, but managed on a precisely similar plan. And down here, in a coffin covered with white velvet, and studded with brass nails, rests the Indian dancing-woman, whose strong will and bitter enmity toward England caused Lord Dalhousie to say of her, when in exile, that she was the only person our government need fear. I place my hand on the coffin, and holding the candle obliquely see a large gilt plate, whereon her name and titles are engraved. And now, a hasty visit to the office of the company at the gateway ; a glance through the registry-book ; another at the sexton's books—thirty-five fat volumes, with the particulars of every burial since the establishment of the company ; another at the huge brass-bound heap, whereon the entire burial-ground is to be found in sectional divisions, each name being written in ; and I say good-bye to Mr. Dawe.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRIAL OF JEWRY.

DON'T talk to me about November ! Don't point with triumphant finger to your Letts's Diary, or hunt out that Almanac which the never-dying Francis Moore, Physician, still persists in producing in alternate black and red letter, and which he calls *Vox Stellarum* ! They may make this present month November, if they like ; it comes after October and precedes December, I know ; but I am not to be put down by mere book-learning and meteorological statistics. I go by the weather, and I see no fog, no Scotch mist, no heavy atmosphere and incessant rain, which, as a Briton, I have a right to expect ; produce for me, if you please, that pea-soup cloud, which, descending on earth, immediately gives rise to an epidemic of "spleen," and causes men to attach themselves to lamp-posts, and hurl themselves from bridges ! I defy you. I decline to accept your—even to my ignorant mind—unscientific explanation of there being "a peg out" in the harmony of the seasons, or that "something has slipped" in the grand mechanism ; but I am with you in your avowal that an April morning has accidentally "turned up" in the middle of the dreary autumn, and very much regret that "a previous engagement," to use the language of society's vortex, prevents my enjoying it as I should wish.

I ought to stop here in my garden for at least an hour more on this Sunday morning, lolling about, and patting my dog's big head, and caressing the cold nose which he thrusts into my hand as he walks gravely by my side, and gazing vacantly but with great delight over the broad green meadows and the purple-tinted cultivated land; over the fertile pastures and the big sweeping gardens, so trimly kept; over the red-roofed houses and the well-thatched ricks, and the tiny threads of the silver Brent, and the whole glorious landscape that lies between me and Harrow Church far away on the horizon. The church-bells are silent yet, and there is not one sound to break the stillness. Looking over the hedge (which within the last few days has become very bare and ragged, and which has concentrated all its few remaining leaves on one spot, like an elderly gentleman conscious of baldness), I see the farm-horses keeping holiday by blundering gravely over their pasture-field, only diversifying their never-wearying amusement of eating by an occasional grave and decorous roll upon their backs, from which they arise with a very astonished look around, and an apparent consciousness of having been betrayed into a temporary abnegation of dignity; I see the ducks all gathered together in a cluster at one corner of the pond in a farm-yard, and the geese, who immediately take affront at Nero's appearance, and hiss, like a theatrical manager's friends who have come in with orders and don't get front places; and—woe is me!—crossing the edge of the farm-yard, by the footpath in the Fair Meadow, I see the vicar of the parish, who gives me a cheery "Good morning," and pointing towards the church, says he shall see me presently. Which statement is, though my excellent friend doesn't know it, the reverse of truth! He will *not* see me presently! To-day, the square pew with the red-covered seats, and the hassocks which want binding, and always go off like dusty fireworks whenever they are touched, will not contain me.

To-day, the charity children who sit behind us will sniff unscared by my occasional remonstrative glances ; to-day, the clerk will have it all his own way with the responses, and the vicar will miss his churchwarden ; for, as I have before remarked, I have a previous engagement, and as I have not before remarked, I am going to make a trial of Jewry.

For the first time for many years, but not for the first time in my life. My first trial of Jewry was, if I mistake not, in connection with a pressing call for money on my part, and the production of a stamped piece of paper on the part of Jewry. Ten pounds was the sum required ; but after Jewry—sitting in his own private house in Burton Crescent—had read the letter of introduction which I presented to him (and which had been given me by Uptree, of the Tin-tax Office), and had made me sign the stamped paper acknowledging myself his debtor for *twelve* pounds, “value received,” he proceeded to explain that he had only a five-pound note in the house. Aghast at this information, I asked him what I was to do. He frankly confessed he did not know ; at length, smitten with a sudden idea, he pointed to an oil-painting of a Spanish boy, which stood against the wall, and told me I might “take the Murillo.” I represented to Jewry that my want was money, not Murillos ; upon which he suggested the pledging of the Murillo for five pounds. “Dicks ’ll do it for you in a minute,” Jewry said. “Here, Dicks !” And Dicks presenting himself, in the shape of a very evil-looking clerk, was told to take “that round the corner,” and to bring five pounds back. Dicks returned in three minutes without the Murillo, and with three pounds, which was all, he said, he could get for it. As Jewry handed me the money, he said : “About the ticket now ? That’s no use to you ! You’ll never take the picture out ; and if you did, you wouldn’t know what to do with it ! Come ; I’ll give you ten shillings for the ticket !” And he did ; and eight pounds

ten was all I ever got for my twelve-pound bill, which I had to pay at the end of the month.

But the trial of Jewry which I am now about to make is of a different kind. It involves my leaving behind me my watch and my purse, my putting on an unobtrusive garb and a wide-awake hat, my stealing out at the back gate so as to be unobserved by the servants, and my making the best of my way to an adjacent railway station. There, after a minute's interval, I am picked up by a train all blossoming with male and female specimens of "Sunday out," and, after making a circuitous journey, calling at Kentish Town and Hampstead Heath, dallying in that Utopia the Camden Road, flitting from Kingsland to Hackney, glancing at Victoria Park, and getting a glimpse of distant masts at Stepney, I am landed at Fenchurch Street, scud rapidly down Billiter Street and St. Mary Axe, and, opposite Bishopsgate Church, into which are crowding the denizens of the neighbourhood, find my intended companions awaiting my arrival. Two in number are my companions ; one, Oppenhardt, my friend, whose innate patrician feelings were outraged by having allowed himself to come east of Temple Bar, and who was standing, with an acute expression of hurt dignity in every feature, contemplating the back of Inspector Wells, who was to be our guide in the trial of Jewry which we were about to make. As I crossed the road, I looked at those two men, and mused, for twenty seconds by the clock, upon the falsity of appearances. There was Oppenhardt—whose paternal grandfather was, I believe, a worthy German sugar-baker at Hamburg—looking, with his blue greatcoat, and his black beard, and his perpetual expansion of nostril, like a peer of the realm at the very least ; and there was Inspector Wells, a pallid round-faced man, with a light fringe of whisker, and a sleepy boiled eye, and a stout idle figure ; and yet I believe the Custom House possesses no clerk having a more acute

knowledge of drawback and rebate, of allowances and landing dues, than Oppenhardt ; nor has the City of London Police an officer so sharp and pains-taking, so unwearied and intelligent, as Inspector Wells. With very few words I make my companions known to each other ; and then, obedient to the inspector's suggestion, we cross the road and prepare for our plunge. "It's going with the stream, gentlemen," says our guide, "and taking the rough with the smooth. You've brought nothing of any value with you, I suppose ? Handkerchiefs in an inside pocket, if you please ! You'll soon see why !" "Do they know you, Wells ?" I asked. "Some of 'em, sir ; but not all. I thought of putting on my uniform coat, but then they'd made way, and you'd have seen the place under rather a false view, perhaps ! It's better we should rough it with the rest."

As he finished his sentence, we turned short round to the right, up a street called Sandys Row, and were in the thick of it. Jewry, which I have come to make trial of, lies in the heart of the city of London, in the corner of the angle made by Bishopsgate Street and Houndsditch. In the midst of it stands a huge block of building, for the most part windowless, but crane-bearing, and having odd trap-doors, some near the roof, some near the basement, for the swallowing in or giving out of goods. For this is where the defunct company which had its head-quarters in the Street of the Hall of Lead—the company which had an army and a navy of its own, and ruled kings and princes, but which has now dwindled down into a mere appanage of Downing Street, and has shrunk into a "board"—used in the old days to store the costly silks which had been brought from its dominions in the far Ind. This hideous building was then filled with the rarest specimens of Eastern handicraft, and looked then just as it looks now, when, from its appearance, you would guess that turmeric, or sago, or starch, or anything equally commonplace, was its contents.

Round it seethes and bubbles Jewry, filling up the very narrow street, with very small strips of pavement on either side, and what ought to have been a way for vehicles, between them ; every bit of space, however, covered with mob—dirty, pushing, striving, fighting, high smelling, higgling, chaffering, vociferating, laughing mob. Shops on either side, so far as can be seen above mob's head ; tool-shops, files, saws, adzes, knives, chisels, hammers, tool-baskets, displayed in the open windows, whence the sashes have been removed for the better furtherance of trade ; doors open, sellers and buyers hot in altercation, spirited trade going on. Hatters', hosiers', tailors', boot-makers' shops, their proprietors forced by competition to leave the calm asylum of their counters, and to stand at their doors uttering wholesome incitement to the passers-by to become purchasers : not to say importuning them with familiar blandishments. For, in what should be the carriage-way is a whole tribe of peripatetic vendors of hats, hosiery, clothes, and boots, hook-nosed oleaginous gentry with ten pair of trousers over one arm and five coats over the other ; with Brobdingnagian boots (some with the soles turned uppermost, showing a perfect armoury of nails), which are carried on a square piece of board, and which look harder than the board itself ; a few hats ; an enormous number of cloth caps of all shapes and sizes—made, so Wells tells me, from the skirts or otherwise unworn parts of old coats. Jewry will stand any trial you like to make of her in the way of actual requirements, I'll warrant it. Are you in search of mental pabulum ? Here it is ! Trays full of literature of all kinds, gaudily-bound books of shilling lore, or tattered copies of the Hebrew Law. Engravings, coloured or plain ? Here shall you see how Herr Jakobs in the Hoher Strasse, Berlin, has copied, or thinks he has copied, some old English prints of fox-hunting scenes ; and here shall you see the marvellous horses, and the more marvellous riders, and the more mar-

vellous leaps which the German artist has probably evolved from the depths of his internal consciousness, as his countryman did the camel ; here shall you see Abraham offering up Isaac ; the former in all the glory of the grand old Jewish type, dignified and bearded, than which , when good, there is scarcely anything better ; but Isaac a little too nosy, and rather too oily, and considerably too lippy, and, on the whole, too much like the young Jew-boy who just now tried to steal a bit of liver out of the frying-pan in which a quantity of it is hissing, and who so nearly received in his eye the point of the steel fork which the Jewish maiden, watching over it earnestly, prodded at that feature. For eating is by no means neglected in Jewry ; in the glassless windows of many of the houses the frying-pans are hard at work, presided over by Jewry's daughters, bright-eyed, dark-skinned, nimble-fingered, shrill-tongued. Pleasant to look upon are Jewry's daughters, despite a certain oiliness, which is probably attributable to contact with the contents of the frying-pan. It is in the contemplation of Jewry's mammas that you begin to doubt the beauty of the race ; for, when you behold Jewry's mammas in the flesh, you generally behold them in rather too much of it, and they have an objection to buttons, and hooks-and eyes, and other ligaments ; a hatred of corsets and chemisettes, and other womanly neatnesses ; a tendency to bulge, and an aversion to soap and water—all of which peculiarities detract from their charms in the impartial eye (meaning mine).

Liver and fried fish are the principal, but by no means the only, edible articles for sale ; through the crowd come wending men with glass dishes on their heads, containing long gelatinous-looking fruits. “ Pickled cucumbers,” says Wells, as they pass, “ pickled cucumbers, never eat by anybody but Jews, and never seen elsewhere ; they’re said to be reg’lar good eating, but I never heard tell of a Christian who tried one. But the Jews—Lor’ bless you—they hold ‘em in their fists, and bite away at ‘em like boys do at lollipops !”

Wells also tells me that pickles of every kind are in high favour in Jewry ; that the denizens thereof will eat pickles at any time, no matter whether onions, cauliflower, cabbage, or what not, and will drink the pickle-liquor “as you would a glass of sherry.” I think I can understand this. I can imagine that a pickle must be, in some conditions, a fine setter up ! Say, at a bargain, for instance. How, just before asking your price, a fine stinging acrid pickle must sharpen your faculties, and clear your brain, and set your nerves, and string your persuasive powers ! How, if you be purchaser, it must lower your tone and your aspects of human life, and degrade the article in your views, and render you generally unpleasant and morose and disinclined to deal, and so eventually successful ! No wonder pickles are at a premium in Jewry.

All this time we are slowly struggling through the crowd, which, never ceasing for an instant, surges round us, reminding one more of an illumination-night mob in its component parts than anything else. And it is curious to see how the itinerant vendors of goods, be they of what sort they may—whether sham jewellery, cheap music, pipes and cigars, bullfinches, boxes of dominoes, bird-whistles, or conjuring tricks—are whirled about in the great vortex of humanity ; now, in the midst of their “patter,” caught upon a surging wave and carried away long past those whom they were but this moment in the act of addressing. So, we pass through Cutler Street and Harrow Alley, borne along with scarcely any motion of our own, the crowd behind us pushing, the crowd before us shoving ; and we, by dint of broad shoulders and tolerable height, making our way with occasional drifting into out-of-the-way courses, but always looked after by Inspector Wells. I don’t suppose there is the smallest danger of our coming to grief, for indeed I never saw a better-behaved mob : thieves there are in scores, no doubt, from burly roughs with sunken eyes and massive jaws, sulkily

elbowing their way through the mass, to “gonophs” and pickpockets of fourteen or fifteen, with their collarless tightly-tied neck-handkerchiefs, their greasy caps and “aggravator” curls—indeed, we have not been in the crowd two minutes, before Oppenhardt has the back pockets of his greatcoat turned inside out, and I felt myself carefully “sounded” all over by a pair of lightly-touching hands. But there is no ribaldry, no blackguardism, no expression of obnoxious opinion. One gentleman, indeed, wants to know “who those collared blokes is,” in delicate allusion to our clean shirts ; but he is speedily silenced ; and one Jewish maiden, who, with much affection, addresses us as “dears,” and advises us to “take care of our pockets,” is sternly rebuked by an elderly matron, who says, “Let ‘em alone : if they comes here, they must suffer.” But, generally, Mob is thoroughly good-tempered. Mob like Oppenhardt very much, and make numerous inquiries as to what he’ll take for his beard, where he lives when he is at home, whether he ain’t from furrin parts, brother to the Princess Hallexandry, a Rooshan, etc. One young gentleman, with a potato-can, points to his fruit, and says, invitingly, “’Ave a tightener, captin :” at which Oppenhardt is pleased. Mob is more familiar with me, as being humbler, and more akin to its own order : in one tremendous struggle, a lad puts his arms round me and cries out, “Here we are! All together, guv’nor!”

So, onward with the stream, catching occasional glimpses of Hebrew inscriptions against the walls, endless repetitions of a handbill issued by the Jewish Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, and announcing a Sabbath lecture by Brother Abrahams over Brother Lazarus recently deceased, noticing here and there huge rolls of edible stuff hung up called “swoss,” which is apparently divided by the thinnest line of religious demarcation from sausage-meat ; onward amidst constant cries of “Pockets, pockets, take care of

your pockets!" and occasional rushes, evidently for pocket-picking purposes, until we make our way to where the crowd becomes even denser, and our progress is slower and harder to fight for, till at last, down a very greasy step, we make our entrance into the Clothes Exchange. This is a roofed building, filled round every side and in the centre with old-clothes stalls; and here, piled up in wondrous confusion, lie hats, coats, boots, hobnailed shoes, satin ball-shoes, driving-coats, satin dresses, hoops, brocaded gowns, flannel jackets, fans, shirts, stockings with clocks, stockings with torn and darned feet, feathers, parasols, black-silk mantles, blue-kid boots, Belcher neckerchiefs, and lace ruffles. This is to what my lady's wardrobe comes, Horatio; this is the antepenultimate of flounce and furbelow, of insertion-tucker and bishop-sleeve. Mamselle Prudence has my lady's leavings, and Abigail looks after her perquisites, and thus the trappings of fashion come down to Jewry, and are refreshed and retouched, sponged and lacquered and refaced, and take their final leave of life amid the fashionable purlieus of Whitechapel, or the nautical homes of the blessed at Shadwell. No lack of customers here; stalwart roughs being jammed into tight pea-jackets by jabbering salesmen, who call on the passers-by to admire the fit. "Plue Vitney, ma tear! Plue Vitney, and shticksh to him like his shkin, don't it?" "Who could fit you if I can't?" "Trai a vethkit, then!"—this to me—"a thplendid vethkit, covered all over with thilver thripes!" While, after declining this gorgeous garment, I find Oppenhardt in the clutches of a lithe-fingered Delilah, who is imploring him to let her sell him "thutch a thirt!" Everywhere the trade is brisk, and the sales progress through an amount of fierce argument, verbal and gesticulatory, which would be held fatal to business anywhere else in London, but which is here accepted as a part of the normal condition of commerce.

In and out of the rows of stalls we dived, Wells in

front, recognised occasionally, sometimes by a tradesman seated in solemn dignity at his stall, who insists on a friendly handshake. Sometimes the inspectorial presence is acknowledged by a sly nod or a wink, as much as to say, “No uniform ! Then you don’t want to be much noticed ! How are you ?” and sometimes by a half-chaffing shout of “Vot, is it you, thargent ! now’t your time for a hovercoat !” We see plenty of public-houses, all with Jewry signs ; and we suggest to Wells that, being half suffocated, perhaps we ought to have “something” after this protracted struggle and the swallowing of this dust. But he says, “Not yet, sir ; in a jewel-house !” and with that mysterious hint proceed we to clear the way out of the Exchange.

In a jewel-house ! As I ponder on the words, my mind rushes away to the regalia in the Tower and Colonel Blood’s attempt thereon ; to Hunt and Roskell’s shop, and the Queen of Spain’s jewels, which were in the old Exhibition of ’51 ; to the Palais Royal at Paris, and the Zeil at Frankfort ; to a queer street at Amsterdam, where I once saw a marvellous collection of jewellery ; to a queer man whom I once met in a coffee-shop, who told me he “travelled in emeralds ;” to Sindbad’s Valley of Diamonds, and—— Wells breaks my reverie by touching my arm. I follow him across a square, in the centre of which are several knots of men in discussion ; opposite us stands the door of “The Net of Lemons,” apparently closed, but it oields to Wells’s touch ; and, following him up a passage, I find myself in a low-roofed, square-built, comfortable room. Round three sides of it are ranged tables, and on these tables are ranged large open trays of jewellery. There they lie in clusters, thick gold chains curled round and round like snakes, long limp silver chains, such as are worn by respectable mechanics over black satin waistcoats on Sundays, great carbuncle pins glowing out of green-velvet cases, diamond rings and pins, and brooches and necklaces.

Modest emeralds in quaint old-fashioned gold settings, lovely pale opals, big finger-rings made up after the antique with cut cornelian centre-pieces, long old-fashioned earrings (I saw nothing in any of the trays in modern settings), little heaps of loose rubies, emeralds, and turquoises, set aside in corners of the trays, big gold and silver cups and goblets and trays and tazzas, here and there a clumsy old épergne, finger-rings by the bushel, pins by the gross, watches of all kinds, from delicate gold Genevas down to the thick turnipy silver "ticker" associated with one's school-days, and shoals of watch-works without cases. "They've melted down the cases," says Inspector Wells to me in a fat whisper, "and can let the works go very cheap." Such trade as is being done is carried on in a very low tone; the customers, nearly all of whom are smoking cigars, bend over the trays and handle the goods freely, sometimes moving with them in their hands to another part of the room, to see them in a better light, and the vendors making not the least objection.

I thought I noticed a whisper run round as we entered, but the sight of Wells was sufficient, and no further notice was taken. We were afterwards told, however, that a stranger is generally unceremoniously walked out, and informed that "it's a private room." After a few moments we were introduced by Inspector Wells to Mr. Marks, the landlord of the house, who wore a pork-pie hat and had a diamond brooch in his shirt, and two or three splendid diamond rings on his not too clean hands, and whose face struck me as being one of the very knowingest I have ever met with. Very affable was Mr. Marks, answering all my questions in the readiest manner. No! he didn't consider it a full morning; you see, the great diamond sale at Amsterdam was on just now, and many of his frequenters were away at it. Had any great bargains been made that morning? Well, there had been a set of diamonds brought in, which were sold about ten o'clock for seventeen hundred

pounds, and which, up to the present time (it was now about twelve), had been re-sold in the room nine times, and each time at a profit. Some men had made two pounds profit, some three, one as much as thirteen pounds—but each had re-sold his diamonds at a profit. “That’s the vay with our people!” said Mr. Marks; “anything for a deal! Ve mustht have a deal, and in a deal ve mustht have a leetle profit. Lath week I had a thouthand poundth tranthaction—I rethold the goods the thame day. Vot vos my profit? Fifty poundth? No! Theven and thicpeth! Thill, there vos a profit. Look here now” (pulling a handful of various coin, perhaps four pounds fifteen in value, out of his left-hand trousers-pocket), “thatth vot I made on my little tranthactionth thith morning! Committhion money I call it.”

I asked Mr. Marks if there were any celebrated characters at that time in his house, and he begged us to walk into his sanctum: a cheery well-appointed kitchen, arrived at by passing through the bar. There he introduced us to Mr. Mendoza, one of the largest diamond-merchants in the world, and a gentleman who had been consulted as to the cutting and setting of the Koh-i-noor. A quiet-looking man Mr. Mendoza, with a sallow complexion and an eye beaming like a beryl. Told by Mr. Marks that we are curious strangers without any objectionable motive, Mr. Mendoza was truly polite, and on being asked if he had anything of price with him, produced from the breast-pocket of his overcoat a blue paper which looked like the cover of a Seidlitz powder, but which contained large unset diamonds to the value of four hundred and seventy-five pounds. As these were exposed to our view, Mr. Marks took from his waistcoat-pocket a glittering pair of fine steel pincers, and, selecting three or four of the largest diamonds, breathed on them and then put them on one side, with a view to purchase. “You use pincers, I see, Mr. Marks?” I

remarked. "Vell, thir," says that urbanest of men, with a wink that conveys volumes, "fingerth is thticky, and dimonth cling to the touch. Mr. Mendoza knowth me and don't mind vot *I* do, but he vouldn't let everybody try his dimonth. You thee, the vay to try a dimonth ith by breathin' on him. Vell, ven *thum* folkth trieth 'em, they inhaleth inthed of ekthalin, and thoveth out their tongueth at the thame time, tho that ven they put'th their tongueth back again, there ain't qvite tho many dimonth in the paper ath there voth at firth!" I asked Mr. Mendoza if he had ever been robbed, and he told me never. Was he not well known? Yes, but he kept to the broad thoroughfares, and never went out at night. He showed us several other papers of diamonds of greater or less value, and several stones handsomely set in rings.

Hospitable intentions overcame Mr. Marks (a really sensible, good-natured, most obliging man), and he insists upon our having a bottle of wine. Clicquot he proposes. We decline Clicquot, but as he will not be balked, and insists upon our "giving it a name," we stand sponsor to sherry. And very good sherry it is, and very good is Mr. Marks's talk over it. He tells us what sober people they are in Jewry, and how they never, by any chance, have more than one glass of brandy-and-water at a sitting; how they leave his rooms at two and go home to dinner, not returning until six in the evening, when they have coffee and sit down to whist, playing away till eleven; "when," says Mr. Marks with a terrific wink in the direction of Inspector Wells, whose back happens to be turned, "when thith houth alwayth clotheth to the minute, accordin' to the Act o' Parlyment." Every word of which talk is, as the Inspector afterwards pithily informs me, "kidment;" a pleasant disyllable, meaning, I believe, in pure Saxon, playful flight of fancy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAREFULLY MOVED IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

IF any reader of this book should require full and valuable information regarding the houses in the various suburbs of London, their size, rent, advantages and disadvantages, annual amount of sewer's rate and land-tax, soil, climate, quality of water, and other particulars, let him address a letter, post-paid, to "Wanderer," under cover to the publishers, and he will have his heart's desire. I am "Wanderer," if you please, and I am in a position to give the information named ; for, during the last ten years, I have led a nomadic and peripatetic existence ; now becoming the tenant of a villa here, now blossoming as the denizen of a mansion there, sipping the sweets of the assessed taxes and the parochial rates, and then flying off, with my furniture in several large vans, to a distant neighbourhood. Want of money, possession of funds, hatred of town, detestation of the country, a cheerful misanthropy, and an unpleasant gregariousness—all these have, one by one, acted upon me, and made me their slave. What I have learned by sad experience, I now purpose to teach : setting myself up as a pillar of example and warning to my dissatisfied fellow-creatures.

Before I married, I lived in chambers in Piccadilly, kept my horse, belonged to the Brummel Club, and was looked

upon as rather a fine fellow ; but when I married, my Uncle Snape (from whom I obtained the supplies for my expenses, and who was a confirmed woman-hater) at once stopped my allowance, and I had nothing but my professional earnings as an Old Bailey barrister, and a hundred a year which I had inherited. Under these circumstances I had intended going into lodgings ; but my wife's family (I don't know exactly what that means : she has no mother, and her father never interferes with her or her sisters : I think it must be her sisters who are the family, but we always speak of "the family") were very genteel, and looked upon lodgings as low ; so it was generally understood that I must take a house, and that "the family" would help to furnish it. I need not mention that there was a great discussion as to where the house should be. The family lived in St. John's Wood, and wished us to be near them ; but the rents in that saintly neighbourhood were beyond my means, and, after a great deal of searching and heart-aching worry, after inspecting a dozen "exact things," "just what you wanted," and "such treasures !" found for me by friends, none of which would do, I at last took a house in Bass's Buildings, in the New Road. That great thoroughfare has since been subdivided, I think, but then it was the New Road stretching from Paddington to Islington, and our house was about a mile from the Paddington end. It was small, but so was the rent, sixty pounds a year, and it was quite large enough for my wife and me and our one servant. It had a little garden in front, between it and the road, with a straight line of flagstones leading direct from the gate to the door-steps, and bits of flower-beds (in which nothing ever grew) intersected by little gravel-paths about a foot wide. This garden was a source of great delight to my humorous friends. One of them could be seen carefully putting one foot before the other, in order that he might not step off the path, and, after wandering in and out between the little beds, would

feign excessive fatigue on his arrival at the house, declaring he had been "lost in the shrubbery;" another would suggest that we should have a guide on the spot to show visitors the nearest way; while a third hoped we intended giving some out-door fêtes in the summer, assuring us that the "band of the Life Guards would look splendid on that," pointing to a bit of turf about the size of a pocket-handkerchief. When the street-door was opened wide back, it entirely absorbed the hall, and we could not get out of the dining-room door; but then we could, of course, always pass out through the "study," a little room like a cistern, which just held my desk and one chair.

There was a very small yard at the back, giving on to a set of stables which had their real entrance in the mews; but we were compelled to cover all our back windows with putty, imitative of ground-glass, on which we stuck cut-out paper designs of birds and flowers, as these looked directly on the rooms over the stables, inhabited by the coachman and his family; and the sight of a stalwart man at the opposite window, shaving himself in very dingy shirt-sleeves within a few feet of your nose, was not considered genteel by the family. We were rather stivy in the upstairs rooms, owing to low ceilings, and a diffidence we felt as to opening the windows, for the New Road is a dusty thoroughfare, and the immediate vicinity of a cab-stand, though handy on some occasions, lets one into rather a larger knowledge of the stock of expletives with which the English language abounds, than is good for refined ears. But when we knew that the coachman was out, we used to open the back windows and grow very enthusiastic over "fresh air from Hampstead and Highgate," which, nevertheless, always seemed to me to have a somewhat stabley twang. One great point with the family was that there were no shops near us: that being an acme of vulgarity which it appears no well-regulated mind can put up with; to be sure, the row immediately opposite

to us was bounded by a chemist's, but then, you know, a chemist can scarcely be called a tradesman—at least the family thought so—and his coloured bottles were rather a relief to the eye than otherwise, giving one, at night, a strange idea of being at sea in view of land. On the door next to the chemist's stood, when we first took possession of our house in Bass's Buildings, a brass plate with "Middlemiss, Portrait Artist," on it, and by its side a little case containing miniatures of *the* officer, *the* student in cap and gown, and *the* divine in white bands, with the top of the wooden pulpit growing out from under his arms, which are common to such professors. It was a thoroughly harmless little art-studio, and apparently did very little business, no one ever being seen to enter its portal. But after a twelve-month Mr. Middlemiss died, and we heard through the electric chain of our common butcher, that his son, a youth of great spirit, was about to carry on the business. The butcher was right. The new proprietor was a youth of great spirit, no half measures with him; he certainly did not fear his fate too much, nor were his deserts small (though in his lamented father's time his dinners were said to have been restricted), for he set his fate upon one touch—of paint—to win or lose it all. He coloured the entire house a bright vermilion, on which, from attic to basement, the following sentences were displayed in deep black letters: "The Shop for Portraits! Stop, Examine, and Judge for Yourselves! 'Sit, Cousin Percy; sit, good Cousin Hotspur'—Shakespeare. Photography defied! Your Likeness in Oils in Ten Minutes! 'The Counterfeit Presentment'—Shakespeare. Charge low, Portraits lasting! Art, not Mechanical *Labour!*" Kit-cat portraits of celebrated characters copied from photographs leered out of every window, while the drawing-room balcony was given up to Lord John Russell waving a parchment truncheon, and Mr. Sturgeon, the popular preacher, squinting at his upheld forefinger. The family were out of town when

this horrible work was undertaken : when they returned, they declared with one voice that we could live in Bass's no longer, and must move at once.

I was not sorry, though I liked the little house well enough ; but we had been confined there in more senses than one, and wanted more room for our family, now increased by a baby and a nurse. The nurse was a low-spirited young person, afflicted with what she called "the creeps," under the influence of which she used to rock to and fro, and moan dismally and slap the baby on the back ; and it was thought that change of scene might do her good. I was glad, too, for another reason. I had recently obtained occasional employment on a daily journal, which detained me until late at night at the newspaper-office, and I had frequently to attend night consultations at the chambers of leading barristers, to whom I was to act as junior. Bass's Buildings were a horrible distance from the newspaper-office and the chambers ; and walking home at night had several times knocked me up. So my wife submitted to the family a proposition that I must remove to some more convenient position ; and the family, after a struggle (based, I am inclined to think, on the reflection that lunch at my expense would not be so practicable), consented.

The neighbourhood of Russell Square was that selected, and in it we began to make constant research. There are few Londoners of the rising generation who know those ghastly streets, solemn and straight, where the daylight at the height of summer fades at four o'clock, and in winter only looks in for an hour about noon ; where the houses, uniform in dirt and dinginess, in lack of paint on their window-sills, and in fulness of filth on their windows, stare confronting each other in twin-like similitude. Decorum Street, Hessian Street, Walcheren Square, Great Dettingen Street, each exactly resembling the other, all equally dreary,

equally deserted, equally heart-breaking, equally genteel. Even the family could not deny the gentility, but were good enough to remember having visited a judge in Culloden Terrace, and having been at the routs of Lady Flack, wife of Sir Nicholas Flack, Baronet, Head of the College of Physicians, and Body-preserved in Ordinary to the Great Georgius of sainted memory. All the districts just named were a little above my means; but eventually I settled down into a house in Great Dowdy Street, a row of small but very eligible tenements on the Dowdy estate. None of your common thoroughfares, to be rattled through by vulgar cabs and earth-shaking Pickford's vans; but a self-included property, with a gate at each end and a lodge with a porter in a gold-laced hat and the Dowdy arms on the buttons of his mulberry-coloured coat, to prevent anyone, except with a mission to one of the houses, from intruding on the exclusive territory. The rent was seventy pounds a year, "on a repairing lease" (which means an annual outlay of from five-and-twenty to thirty to keep the bricks and mortar and timbers together), and the accommodation consisted of a narrow dining-room painted salmon-colour, and a little back room looking out upon a square black enclosure in which grew fearful fungi; two big drawing-rooms, the carpeting of which nearly swallowed a quarter's income; two good bed-rooms, and three attics. I never went into the basement save when I visited the cellar, which was a mouldy vault under the street-pavement, only accessible through the area, and consequently rendering anyone going to it liable to the insults of rude boys, who would grin through the area-railings, and say, "Give us a drop, guv'nor;" or, "Mind you don't drop the bottle, old 'un;" and other ribald remarks; but I believe the kitchen was pronounced by the servants to be "stuffy," and the whole place "ill convenient," there being no larder, pantry, nor the usual domestic arrangements. I know, too, that we

were supposed to breed and preserve a very magnificent specimen of the blackbeetle ; insects which migrated to different parts of the house in droves, and which to the number of five-and-twenty being met slowly ascending the drawing-room stairs, caused my wife to swoon, and me to invest money in a hedgehog : an animal that took up his abode in the coal-cellar on the top of the coals, and, retiring thither early one morning after a surfeit of beetles, was supposed to have been inadvertently “laid” in the fire by the cook in mistake for a lump of Wallsend.

I don’t think there were many advantages in the Great Dowdy Street house (though I was very happy there, and had an immense amount of fun and pleasure) beyond the proximity to my work, and the consequent saving in cab-hire and fatigue. But I do recollect the drawbacks ; and although six years have elapsed since I experienced them, they are constantly rising in my mind. I remember our being unable ever to open any window without an immediate inroad of “blacks :” triturate soot of the most penetrating kind, which at once made piebald all the antimacassars, toilet-covers, counterpanes, towels, and other linen ; I remember our being unable to get any sleep after five A.M., when, at the builder’s which abutted on our back enclosure, a tremendous bell clanged, summoning the workmen to labour, and from which time there was such a noise of sawing, and hammering, and planing, and filing, and tool-grinding, and bellows-blowing, interspersed with strange bellowings in the Celtic tongue from one Irish labourer to another, and mingled with objurgations in pure Saxon from irate overseers, that one might as well have attempted a quiet nap in the neighbourhood of Babel when the tower was in course of erection. I remember, on the first occasion of our sleeping there, a horrible yell echoing through the house, and being discovered to proceed from the nurse aforenamed, who had, at the time of her shrieking, about

six A.M., heard “ghostes a bursting in through the walls.” We calmed her perturbed spirit, finding no traces of any such inroads; but were aroused in a similar manner the next morning, and then discovered that the rushing in of the New River supply, obedient to the turncock’s key, was the source of the young person’s fright. I remember the hot summer Sunday afternoons, when the pavement would be red-hot, and the dust, and bits of straw, and scraps of paper, would blow fitfully about with every little puff of air, and the always dull houses would look infinitely duller with their blinds down, and no sound would fall upon the ear save the distant hum of the cabs in Holborn, or the footfall of some young person in service going to afternoon church—or to what was, in her mind, its equivalent—in all the glory of open-worked stockings, low shoes, and a prayer-book swaddled in a white cotton pocket-handkerchief. I have sat at my window on scores of such Sundays, eyeing the nose of Lazarus over the dwarf Venetian blinds opposite, or the gorgeous waistcoat of Eliason, a little higher up (for the tribes are great in the neighbourhood). I have stared upwards to catch a glimpse of the scrap of blue unclouded sky, visible above the houses; and then I have thought of Richmond Hill; of snowy tablecloths, and cool Moselle-cup, and salmon-cutlets, in a room overhanging the river at the Orkney Arms, at Maidenhead; of that sea-breeze which passes the little hotel at Freshwater Bay, in wild hurry to make play over the neighbouring downs; of shaded walks, and cool retreats, and lime avenues, and overhung bathing-places, and all other things delicious at that season; until I have nearly gone mad with hatred of Great Dowdy Street, and fancied myself pretty able to comprehend the feelings of the polar bears in their dull retrogressive promenade in the Zoological Gardens. That none of our friends had ever heard of Great Dowdy Street; that no cabman could be instructed as to its exact whereabouts, naming it generally as

“somewhere near the Fondlin’;” that migration to a friend’s house in a habitable region to dinner occasioned an enormous expense in cab-fare ; that all the tradesmen with whom we had previously dealt declined our custom, “as they never sent that way ;” that we found Tottenham Court Road a line of demarcation, behind which we left light, and sunshine, and humanity—on our side of which we tumbled into darkness and savagery ; that we were in the midst of a hansom-cab colony, clattering home at all hours of the night ; and in the immediate neighbourhood of all the organ-men, who gave us their final grind just before midnight ; all these were minor but irritating annoyances. At length, after six years’ experience of this life, we heard that Uncle Snape was dead, and had left me some money ; and we immediately determined on quitting Great Dowdy Street.

“Oh, my life in Egypt !” sighs Cleopatra in the Dream of Fair Women, remembering the dalliance and the wit, the Libyan banquets, and all the delights of that brief but glorious season. “Oh, my life in Agatha Villa, Old Brompton !” say I, which was quite as brief, and almost as glorious. We entered upon Agatha Villa immediately on quitting Great Dowdy Street, and revelled in the contrast. Such an elegant house ; such a dining-room in red flock paper and black oak furniture, such a drawing-room in satin paper and chintz, opening with large French windows upon a little lawn, such a study for me, such a spare bed-room for a bachelor friend from Saturday till Monday ! It was at Agatha Villa that we commenced our delightful little Sunday dinners—which, indeed, finished in the same place. It was at Agatha Villa we first discovered how fond people were of us ; what a popular writer I was ; how my oratorical displays at the Old Bailey were making a sensation. People liked coming to see us at Agatha Villa : not for the mere sake of what they got, of course, but

because they were sure of meeting “such charming people” at our house : money was all very well, they would remark, but no money could bring together such a host of genius as was always to be seen at Agatha Villa. The host of genius (I am not speaking of myself) was expensive to entertain ; it stopped late, it dined heavily, it smoked on the lawn, and remained sipping cold drinks until past midnight. Its admirers remained too : sometimes some of the host of genius borrowed money and didn’t return it ; the host of genius was always either painting a picture which I was expected to buy, or giving a concert which we were expected to patronise, or having a “ben” for which we had to take stalls. From one of the admirers of the host of genius I bought a pair of horses, they were not good horses ; from another I purchased a phaeton, it *was* a bad one ! I confess I did not like the manner in which some of the host of genius used to climb up the walls and kiss their hands to Miss Crump’s young ladies who were walking in the next garden, and I owned to Miss Crump that it was too strong retaliation even for the pianoforte practice at five A.M. : they could not take any liberties with my neighbour on the other side, for he was Dr. Winks, the celebrated mad-doctor, and we were always in a state of mental terror lest some of his patients should get loose and come over the wall at us. However, the life at Agatha Villa, though merry, was brief. Through my own exertions, and those of the host of genius, I ran through a couple of thousand pounds in two years, and then the Cotopaxi Grand Imperial Mining Company, in which I had invested the rest of Uncle Snape’s money, went to smash, and I had to give up Agatha Villa.

The thought of having to return to London and its dreariness, in the summer which had just set in, was the bitterest morsel of that tart humility which we were about to partake of ; and you may judge, therefore, with what delight I received an offer of a country-house, rent free, for

a year. "It's a capital old house, any way," said old Cutler, its owner, "a capital house, near town, and yet thoroughly in the country. I'm going to take my gal abroad for a year to see the Continent, and you're not only welcome to live at Wollops, but I shall be obliged to you for keeping the place aired." Now, Wollops *was* a house, if you like! An old red-brick Queen-Anne mansion, with little deep mullioned diamond-paned windows, with quaint old armour in the hall, and a portrait of Brabazon de Wollop, temp. Charles the Second, over the chimney-piece; there are long passages, and tapestry-hung rooms, and oak corridors, and secret doors, and a wine-cellar so like a subterraneous dungeon, that my heart sank within me every time I entered it; there were likewise numerous bed-rooms, with tremendous bedsteads, all plumes and hangings; and a stone kitchen like that one in the Tower of London which Mr. Cruikshank drew. The house stood in the middle of splendid grounds; there was a carriage drive up to it; its drawing and dining room windows looked out upon a beautiful lawn dotted here and there with brilliant beds of verbena and scarlet geranium; and there was a lake, and a kitchen-garden, and an orchard, all kept up at Mr. Cutler's expense; and everything was so noble and so grand, that a friend, who knew the reason of our quitting Agatha Villa, remarked, on seeing Wollops, that one more attempt at retrenchment would take us into Buckingham Palace. From our windows we looked away over green fields, to Harrow on the one side, to Highgate on the other, and it was worth something when coming

From brawling courts
And dusty purlieus of the law,

to feel your feet on the turf, with the sweet fresh air blowing round you, and that soft silence, broken only by the pipe of bird or hum of insect, which is the greatest of all rural charms to an overworked Londoner. Wollops was too far

for the host of genius, as they could not have got back at night, so we only had our own friends and the family. I am happy to say that the croquet-parties at Wollops were the cause of marrying off my wife's two younger sisters: one to a revising barrister, and the other to a county-court judge: while the elder girls, who had been very uncivil about what they called the "goings on" at Agatha Villa, were so delighted with Wollops that they forgave us off-hand, and each came and stayed a month. All this was during the summer weather; the autumn of that year was as good as summer, warm, clear, and sunny, and we were thoroughly happy. But, one fatal morning in the middle of November we got up and found winter had arrived; the wind roared through the old house, and moaned and shrieked in the long corridors; the rain dashed against the badly-fitting romantic windows, and lodged in large pools on their inner sills; the water-pipe along the house was choked, overflowed, soaked through the old red brick, which was just like sponge, and coming through the drawing-room wall, spoilt my proof copy of Landseer's *Titania*. The big bare trees outside rattled and clashed their huge arms, the gardeners removed everything from the beds, the turf grew into rank grass, and the storms from Harrow to Highgate were awful in their intensity. Inside the house, the fires would not light for some time, and then the chimneys smoked awfully, and the big grates consumed scuttles of coals and huge logs of wood without giving out the smallest heat. The big hall was like a well; after dark the children were afraid to go about the passages; and the servants came in a body and resigned, on account of the damp of the stone kitchen. Gradually the damp penetrated everywhere; lucifers would not strike, a furry growth came upon the looking-glass, the leather chairs all stuck to us when we attempted to rise. My wife wanted us to leave Wollops, but I was firm—for two nights afterwards; then the rats,

disturbed by the rains from their usual holes, rushed into our bed-room and danced wildly over us. The next morning at six A.M. I despatched the gardener to town, to bring out three cabs, and removed my family in those vehicles to lodgings in Cockspur Street, where I am at present.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EASTER REVIVAL.

A PLEASANT place, the Fenchurch Street Railway Station, to a person who knows at which of the numerous pigeon-holes he should apply for his ticket, and who does not mind running the chance of being sent to Margate when his destination is Kew. A pleasant place for a person without corns, who is, what grooms say of horses, "well ribbed up," and whose sides are impervious to elbow-pressure; who is complacent in the matter of being made the resting-place for bundles in white-spotted blue-cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, who is undisturbed by squirted tobacco-juice, who likes the society of drunken sailors, Jew crimps, and a baby-bearing population guiltless of the wash-tub. It has its drawbacks, the Fenchurch Street Railway Station, but for that matter, so has Pall Mall. It was crammed last Easter Monday—so crammed that I had literally to fight my way up to the pay-place, above which was the inscription, "Tickets for the Woodford line;" and when I had reached the counter, after many manifestations of personal strength and activity, it was disappointing to receive a ticket for a hitherto unheard-of locality called Barking, and to be severely told that I could not book to Woodford for twenty minutes. I retired for a quarter of an hour into the shadow of one of the pillars supporting the waiting-hall, and listened

to the dialogue of two old farmers who were patiently waiting their turn. "A lot of 'em!" said one, a tall old man with brown body-coat, knee-cords, and top-boots, having at his feet a trifle of luggage in the shape of a sack of corn, an old saddle, and a horse-collar. "A lot of 'em! all a pleasurin' excursionin', I s'pose!" "Ah!" said the other, a wizen dirty-faced little fellow in a long drab great-coat reaching to his heels, "it were different when we was young, warn't it, Maister Walker? It was all fairs then!" "Stattys!" said the first old boy, as though half in correction; "there were Waltham Statty, and Leyton Statty, and Harpenden Statty, and the gathering of the beastes at Cheshunt, and that like!" And then the two old fellows interchanged snuff-boxes and shook their heads in silent lamentation over the decadence of the times. The twenty minutes wore away; the Barking people disappeared slowly, filtering one by one through the smallest crack of a half-opened door; and a stout policeman shouting, "Now for the Woodford line!" heralded us to the glories of martyrdom through the same mysterious outlet.

What took me out of town last Easter Monday? Not a search for fresh air; there was plenty of that in London, blowing very fresh indeed, and rasping your nose, ears, and chin, and other uncovered portions of your anatomy, filling your eyes and mouth with sharp stinging particles of dust, and cutting you to the very marrow, whenever you attempted to strike out across an open space. Not an intention to see the country, which was then blank furrow and bare sticks, where in a couple of months would be smiling crops and greenery; not with any view of taking pedestrian exercise, which I abominate; not to join in any volunteer evolutions; not to visit any friends; simply to see the "revival of the glorious Epping Hunt" which was advertised to take place at Buckhurst Hill, and to witness the uncarting of the deer before the Roebuck Inn.

We were not a very sporting “lot” in the railway carriage into which I forced an easy way. There were convivialists in the third and second classes (dressed for the most part in rusty black, carrying palpable stone-bottles, which lay against their breast-bones under their waistcoats, and only protruded their black-corked necks), who were going “to the Forest,” and who must have enjoyed that umbrageous retreat on one of the bitterest days in March ; but we had no nonsense of that kind in my first-class bower. There was a very nice young man opposite me, in a long great-coat, a white cravat, and spectacles, which were much disturbed in their fit by the presence of a large mole exactly on the root of his nose between his eyebrows, upon which the glasses rode slantingly, and gave him a comic, not to say inebriated look : a curate, apparently, by the way in which he talked of the schools, and the clubs, and the visitings, and the services, to the old lady whom he was escorting ; a clean, wholesome-looking old lady enough, but obviously not strong in conversation, as she said nothing the whole journey but, with a sigh of great admiration, “Ah ! Mr. Parkins !” and rubbed her hands slowly over a black-and-white basket, like a wicker draught-board. Then there were two City gentlemen, who had “left early,” as they called it, and were going to make holiday in digging their gardens, who, after languidly discussing whether the reduction in the Budget would be on insurance or income, waxed warm in an argument on the right of way through Grunter’s Grounds. And next to me there was a young lady, who, from the colour and texture of a bit of flesh between the end of her puce-coloured sheepskin-glove and the top of her worked cuff, I judged to be in domestic service, but who had on a round hat with a white feather, a black silk cloak, a scarlet petticoat, and a crinoline which fitted her much in the same way that the “Green” fits Jack on the 1st of May. We dropped this young lady at Snares-

brook, where she was received by a young man with a larger amount of chin than is usually bestowed on one individual ; the two City men got out at Woodford, with the Grunter's Grounds question still hot in dispute ; and at Buckhurst Hill I left the curate and the old lady sole occupants of the carriage.

There was no difficulty in finding the way to the scene of the sports, for the neighbourhood was alive, and crowds were ascending the hill. Not very nice crowds either, rather of the stamp which is seen toiling up Skinner Street on execution mornings, or which, on Easter Mondays, fifteen years ago, patronised Chalk-Farm Fair. Close-fitting caps pulled down over the eyes, with hanks of hair curling out from underneath, no shirt-collars, wisps of cotton neck-cloths, greasy shiny clothes, thick boots, and big sticks, characterised the male visitors : while the ladies were remarkably free in their behaviour. The resident population evidently did not like us ; all the houses were tight closed, and the residents glared at us hatefully out of their windows, and received with scornful looks our derisive remarks. A prolific neighbourhood, Buckhurst Hill, whither the moral and cheerful doctrines of the late Mr. Malthus have apparently not penetrated, as there was no window without a baby, and there were many with three ; a new neighbourhood, very much stuccoed, and plate-glassed, and gable-ended, like the outskirts of a sea-side watering-place ; very new in its shops, where the baker combined corn-chandlery and life-assurance agency—the greengrocer had a small coal and wood and coke tendency—and where you might be morally certain that under the shadow of the chemist's bottles and plaster-of-paris horse lurked bad light-brown cigars. On Buckhurst Hill one first became aware of the sporting element in the neighbourhood by the presence of those singular specimens of horse-flesh which hitherto had been only associated in my mind with Hampstead and

Blackheath — wretched wobegone specimens, with shaggy coats, broken knees, and a peculiar lacklustreiness of eye, and which got pounded along at a great pace, urged by their riders, who generally sat upon their necks with curled knees, after the fashion of the monkeys in the circus steeple-chase.

When we got to the top of the hill, we emerged upon the main road, and joined the company, who, possessing their own vehicles, had disdained the use of the railway. The most popular conveyance I found to be that build of cart which takes the name of "Whitechapel," from the fashionable neighbourhood where it is most in vogue ; but there were also many four-wheeled chaises, so crammed with occupants as to merit the appellation of "cruelty-vans," constantly bestowed upon them by the light-hearted mob ; there were pleasure-vans filled with men, women, and children ; a few cabs, and a large number of those low flat trucks, which look as if a drawer in a conchologist's cabinet had been cleared out, put upon wheels, and had a shambling pony or depressed donkey harnessed to it, and which, I believe, are technically known as "flying bedsteads." The dust raised by these vehicles, and by a very large pedestrian crowd, was overwhelming : the noise caused by the traffic and by the shouting of the many-headed was terrific ; and the thought of an early lunch in some secluded corner of the Roebuck (a tavern whence the hunt starts, and which has for many years enjoyed an excellent reputation) was my only source of comfort. A few minutes' walk brought me to an extemporised fair, with gingerbread stalls, nut-shooting targets, and two or three cake-stands, with long funnels projecting from them like gigantic post-horns : which I found from their inscriptions were, "Queen Victoria's own Rifle Gallery," "The British Volunteers' Range—Defence not Defiance—Try a Shot ;" and beyond this fair lay the Roe-buck, charmingly quaint and clean, and gable-ended, and purple-fronted.

The crowd round the door was rather thick, and it was with some difficulty that I edged my way over the threshold, and then I came upon a scene. What should have been the space in front of the bar, a passage leading through into a railed courtyard joining upon the garden, some stairs leading to the upper rooms, and a side-room, the parlour of the place, were all completely choked with visitors. And such visitors! The London rough is tolerably well known to me; I have seen him in his own peculiar territories in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane and Shadwell; I have met him at executions and prize-fights; I have been in his company during the public illuminations; but I never saw such specimens as had taken indisputable possession of the Roebuck Inn, nor did I ever elsewhere hear such language. All ages were represented here—the big burly rough with the receding forehead, the massive jaw, and the deep-set restless eye; and the old young boy, the “gonoph,” whose oaths were as full-flavoured as those of the men, and, coming from such childish lips, sounded infinitely more terrible; brazen girls flaunting in twopenny finery; and battered women bearing weazened children in their arms. Approach to the bar-counter was only possible after determined and brisk struggles, and loud and fierce were the altercations as to the prices charged, and the attempts at evading payment. I could not get out of the house by the door at which I had entered, as the crowd behind was gradually forcing me forward, and I had made up my mind to allow myself to drift through with the mob, when I heard a cry of “Clear the road!” and, amid a great shouting and laughing, I saw a gang of some thirty ruffians in line, each holding on to the collar of the man in front of him, make a rush from the back door to the front, pushing aside or knocking down all who stood in the way. Being tall and tolerably strong, I managed to get my back against a wall, and to keep it there, while these Mohocks swept

past ; but the people round me were knocked over like ninepins. This wave of humanity ebbed in due course, and carried me out with it into the garden, where I found a wretched brass band playing a polka, and some most atrocious-looking scoundrels grotesquely dancing in couples to the music.

I got out through the garden to the stables, and thence round again to the front, where I found an access of company, all pretty much of the same stamp. I was pushing my way through them when I heard my name pronounced, and looking round saw an old acquaintance. Most Londoners know the appearance of the King of the Cabmen : a sovereign whose throne is a hansom driving-box, and whose crown is the curliest-brimmed of "down the road" hats. I have for many years enjoyed the privilege of this monarch's acquaintance, and have, in bygone days, been driven by him to the Derby, when he has shown a capital appreciation in the matter of dry sherry as a preferable drink to sweet champagne, and once confidentially informed me—in reference to his declining a remnant of a raised pie—that "all the patties in the world was nothing to a cold knuckle of lamb." The monarch couldn't quite make out my presence on Buckhurst Hill (he was evidently there as a patron of the sport), but he struck his nose with his forefinger, and said mysteriously, "Lookin' after 'em, sir ?" I nodded, and said, "Yes ;" upon which he winked affably, declared, without reference to anything in particular, that he "wasn't licked yet, and wouldn't be for ten year," and made his way in the direction of the tap.

The aspect of the day now settled down into a slate-coloured gloom, and a bitter east-wind came driving over the exposed space in front of the Roebuck where the crowd stood. Hitherto there had not been the slightest sign of any start ; but now some half-dozen roughish men on long-haired cobs—ill-built clumsy creatures, without the

ghost of a leap in any of them—were moving hither and thither; and in the course of half an hour the old huntsman, mounted on a wretched chestnut screw, blowing a straight bugle, and followed by four couple and a half of harriers, made his way through the crowd and entered the inn yard. After another half-hour, we had another excitement in the arrival of a tax-cart containing something which looked like the top of a tester-bed in a servant's attic, but under which was reported to be the stag ; and the delight of the populace manifested itself in short jumps and attempted peepings under the mysterious cover. Then we flagged again, and the mob, left to itself, had to fall back on its own practical humour, and derived great delight from the proceedings of a drunken person in a tall hat, who butted all his neighbours in the stomach—and from a game at football, which had the advantage of enabling the players to knock down everybody, men, women, and children, near to whom the ball was kicked. At length even these delights began to pall : the start had been advertised for two o'clock—it was already three ; and discontent was becoming general, when a genius hit upon the notion of setting fire to the lovely bright yellow furze with which the heath was covered, and which was just coming into blossom. No sooner thought of than accomplished ! Not in one place but in half-a-dozen ; smoke rose, crackling was heard, and in a few minutes in place of the pretty flower was a charred and blackened heap. This was a tremendous success ; and the mob, though half stifled by the smoke and half singed by the flame, which leapt fiercely from bush to bush under the influence of the wind, and roared and crackled lustily, remained thoroughly delighted, until the crowd of mounted sportsmen had much increased, and the deer-containing cart was seen to be on the move.

Bumping and jolting over the rugged ground, the cart was brought to the bottom of a small hill, and shouts arose

that a space should be cleared into which the deer could be uncarted. But this phase of your British public does not like a clear space; it likes to be close to what it wants to see; and the consequence was, that the crowd clustered round within four feet of the cart, and steadfastly refused to go back another inch. The persons who managed the business seemed to object; but, as all remonstrance was futile, they took off the top of the tester-bed, and a light-brown deer, without any horns, and looking exceedingly frightened, bounded out of the cart, took two short side jumps, amid the roar of a thousand voices, leaped some palings into an adjacent garden, and then started off across country at a splitting pace. The horsemen did not attempt to follow, but struck off, some to the right and some to the left, to find an easy way into the fields; and the pedestrians climbed on walls, and gave a thousand contrary opinions as to where "she" had gone. The dogs I never saw, nor did I see any further traces of the mounted field, nor of the stag, nor of the huntsman, nor did I find anyone who had. No sooner was the stag off than the people began to return home; and I followed their example: convinced that of the numerous silly "revivals" of which we have heard of late, this attempt to resuscitate the Epping Hunt is one of the least required and the most absurd.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MILLERS AND THEIR MEN.

WHAT does he say? He says: “Come at six to-night.” Another delay! When shall I hear; when shall I get it?

What I want to get is “the office:” not a place of trust, not a mahogany-desked, leather-chaired, sky-lighted place of business; not the post-office, nor the booking-office, nor the police-office, nor the railway-office, but still “the office.” From one office I am to get another; and the first is the head-quarters of the sporting world, and the second is the name of the place where the two great Millers, whose fame has extended far beyond the farinaceous world, are speedily to meet, and the whole is—Sphynx avaunt! I will talk no longer in riddles; it is useless; for some Oedipus will soon unravel my mystery, remembering of Miss Kilmansegg—

How her husband had stormed and treated her ill,
Because she refused to go down to a mill,
She couldn’t tell where, but remembered still
That the Miller’s name was Mendoza.

So, to be plain and explicit, I am favoured with introductions to the conductors of that newspaper which has for many years been the oracle of the sporting world, and the guide, philosopher, and friend of sporting men of every degree; and from them I have been promised “the office,” or the

information when and where the meeting between Messrs. Heenan and King, the two great Millers, is to take place, and the chance of a safe conveyance to the meeting. It ought to repay me when it comes off, for it has been a source of tremendous annoyance beforehand. For days previously I have lived in a whirl of excitement and in a cloud of slang. In order that everything should be thoroughly "square," everything has been left excessively "dark," everybody has been enveloped in a halo of Rosicrucian mystery, which was so infectious as to lay hold of everybody else. Nobody spoke above a whisper about anything; and I am bound to state that, falling in with the general view, I have winked until my eye is weak, and laid my finger alongside my nose until the latter organ is bent, and spoken in a charnel-house whisper whenever the topic of the Millers was broached, without the smallest idea why I have gone through any of these proceedings. I have been to the office of the sporting newspaper—once on Tuesday morning, when I was very civilly received, and told to come on that evening, when I was begged to look in the following morning; and now they tell me, with the utmost courtesy, and with an amount of mystery which is in itself exciting, to "come at six to-night." Yesterday, when I paid my first visit, the whole office was filled with excited gentlemen of the pugilistic profession, who were, I learned, the chosen "ring-keepers," and who had come there to receive instructions as to their duties; with tawny moustached swells, known to the establishment, who were courteously addressed; and with prying members of the public, who were speedily dismissed. Now, on this Wednesday morning, I find the place in ordinary working order, and with not a stranger present. I pass the glazed room, where the compositors are busily picking up their types; I find one of the principal members of the staff reading his proof; I see the boys flying about with the long wet slips just fresh pulled;

to-night at six evidently means business ; either I shall know everything then, or the meeting of the Millers is indefinitely postponed.

I return to my ordinary avocations ; and while engaged in them during the afternoon I am visited by my own familiar friend, who tells me that the great event is over—that the Millers met that morning, and that, after an interview of an hour and a half's duration, one of them, the representative of Transatlantic grist, had succumbed. There is no doubt about it ; the interview took place near Micheldever station ; and my friend has just seen a railway-guard hot from the South-Western line. To my friend I repeat my mysterious pantomime ; I wink my eye, and lay my forefinger alongside my nose. There must be some tremendous hidden force in this ; for my friend retires, evidently believing that the guard aforesaid is mendacious. As St. Mary's clock strikes six, I enter the sporting newspaper office ; the compositors are hard at it under their green-paper-shaded lamps, the boys are flying about with the fluttering slips of proof ; but the editor's door is locked, and the gentleman to whom I have been accredited has not come in. So I wait in the passage, humbly expectant. Close by me is a little closet, wherein a boy and a man are "reading proofs." I hear them running over the subject-matter in that dull monotonous jargon invariable on such occasions. I think it must be coursing that they are discussing, for I catch references to Mr. Jones's black dog and Mr. Robinson's slate-coloured bitch ; and then a stout man in shirt-sleeves and a white apron—the master-printer evidently—looks in, and asks if they've got that Billiards, and what's become of the slip of Canine. Now arrives my friend, and with him another gentleman, who is introduced to me as the oldest member of the journal's staff, who has been connected with it for thirty years, and who has officially attended more meetings of Millers than perhaps anyone living ; a quiet

unpretending-looking gentleman enough, but with an eye like a bead, and a firm-set jaw looking like Determination itself. The editor of the sporting newspaper, who is always stakeholder and referee on all occasions when the Millers meet, and who throughout his life has laboured with the utmost spirit to ameliorate the social position of the Millers, never shrinking from condemning them in the most courageous manner and under circumstances involving the deepest personal peril to himself when they were wrong, but fighting their battles manfully when they were right—the editor is unfortunately laid up by illness at home, and my new acquaintance with the determined jaw is on this occasion, as on many previous ones, to act as his representative. He tells me that he and his party will sleep at the London Bridge Terminus Hotel ; that he will engage a bed there for me, and “take care of me in the morning.” Mysterious, but satisfactory, I retire with an expression of thanks, feeling sure that the meeting of the Millers will speedily take place, and that I shall be there.

The meeting of the Millers ! London thinks of nothing else ! Round the door of the office of the sporting newspaper stands an open-mouthed expectant crowd, who glare at me as I come out, and hoarsely bellow to me to “say vere.” As I pay my cabman, he touches his hat and asks me for the latest “tip.” At my club, where I dine, I find the coffee-room tables surrounded by strange faces, country members, who have made the cattle-show the excuse for a flying visit to town ; but who have really come up to see the Millers meet. In the smoking-room æsthetic conversation is voted a bore, and scandal is snuffed out. On this evening Bopps can get no audience for his complaints against the Royal Academy ; Sheet’s rumour of the intended starting of a new magazine is pooh-poohed ; and Middleditch’s story of a peccant countess does not enchain a single listener. The Millers, the Millers ! their weight and height ; what one

has done, and what the other promises ; their system of training ; who is “on,” and what are the offered odds ; what is the meaning of “fighting the sack,” and what is always a deadly blow ; the Millers, the Millers ! until we get so excited that little Gillott, who has never wielded anything heavier than a pen, doubles up his arm and begins to feel for his biceps ; and old Millboard, who painted “Corinthians” half a century ago, totters on to his feet to show us how Tom Cribb floored Molyneux. Still, the Millers ! Looking in at the Music Hall, on my way down to the City, I find the bucolic element laughing hoarsely, indeed, at the humour of the black men or the saltatory gyrations of the Cure ; but relapsing during the *entr'actes* into earnest talk about the Millers, and the chances of their coming meeting ; the brickman outside opines that I am a captain, and that I shall be “looking on at 'em at Aldershot” in the morning ; the topic soon intrudes into an extemporised verse of a comic song (very shaky in the rhyme, and not at all measured as to the number of words in a line), and is received with roars of applause. So did the people jest and laugh before the great encounter of the gladiators on the last day of Pompeii, when Sporus boasted, and Lydon hoped, and the girl sang

Ho ! ho ! for the merry, merry show !

Still the Millers ! Down at the London Bridge Terminus Hotel, where I find my friends, excited groups dot the coffee and smoking rooms, and the young ladies in the bar smile with thorough knowingness when we desire to be called at four. The manager is a wag, and “supposes we are going out shooting,” employing, at the same time, the mysterious wink and the masonic touch of the nose. The waiter who brings our grog lingers near the table to catch fragments of our conversation, and points us out to yearning visitors. As we take our bed-candles, our friend Determination stops to

exchange a word or two with a flat-nosed man, who, followed by three vacuous youths, has just entered. "That was Jim Sloggers," says Determination afterwards; "he's taking down Lord Tomnoddy and those two other swells." It is one o'clock before I get to bed; it is two o'clock before I get to sleep. From the adjacent railway-yard come hoarse murmurings as of a gathering crowd; shrieks of belated engines, moaning, and grunts of overladen goods trains; up the staircase comes tumbling the bucolic element, apparently somewhat the worse for brandy-and-water; and hoarse good-nights, in all kinds of uncouth dialects, break upon the ear, then gigantic boots are flung out, waking every echo; and finally, with my mind full of the Millers, I glide off into the land of nod.

The remorseless "boots" thunders at my door at four o'clock; and, after a hasty toilette, I make my way down the staircase (on which I encounter a gentleman in full dress, who has just come from the Dramatic College Ball, and who stares in great wonder at my simple costume and billycock hat, and who is evidently tremendously amazed at my carrying the lid of a hamper under my arm) to the coffee-room, where I find my friends already at breakfast off cold chicken and ham. My original acquaintance of the sporting newspaper, who is to act as reporter on this occasion, has apparelled himself in a shooting suit, thick boots and gaiters, and has immediately under his greatcoat and over all the rest of his clothes a thick blue woollen fisherman's guernsey, a most splendid preventive against cold; he has a thick travelling-cap on his head, and in his pocket he carries a gigantic note-book, large enough to contain at least a volume of Macaulay's History written out in text hand. I glance at Determination, and find him in the dress of the previous evening; frock-coat, dark trousers, chimney-pot hat, blue bird's-eye scarf with valuable pin well protruded, watch-chain plainly visible: "Lord bless you! they

won't touch me," he says ; "they know better!" A hurried breakfast over, we strike across to the terminus, through a very small fringe of blackguardism we push our way instantaneously, and then march quietly up between open ranks of police to a door, through which we are at once admitted to the station. At the open window I pay three sovereigns, receiving in return a red-and-white ticket, bearing the words "From London, and back;" then I take temporary leave of my companions, who have business to look after ; and being joined by two other friends, I seat myself in a second-class compartment of the enormous train, which is already nearly full.

There is no mistake about our compartment being quite full. In addition to myself and my two friends there are a thin hatchet-faced pedestrian, two or three pugilists, one with an enormously thick stick, one rather merrily "fresh," but all perfectly civil and inoffensive, and two nondescript men, one with little bleary red eyes. A rough freemasonry is at once established ; all talk of the admirable manner in which the arrangements have up to this point been carried out ; one of the pugilists has just left King ; "I aired his fightin' drawers for him and see him eat three chops for his breakfast, like a man," he says ; and we are full of conversation, when a porter, passing along the line of carriages, calls out, "All tickets ready." Hasty whispering takes place between three or four of my fellow-travellers ; and the thin pedestrian, who is next to me, asks me if "I'd mind sitting for'ard." I comply at once ; the pedestrian shrinks into nothing behind my tolerably broad shoulders, and the man on the other side (the pugilist with the stick) sits "for'ard" too. Plainly the pedestrian has no ticket and is trying a dodge. But, alas for him, the ticket collector, a strong official, bodily enters the carriage, and collects from each individual. "Your ticket?" to the pedestrian. "Mr. Willoughby's got it," stammering reply. "What?" Stam-

mering reply repeated. “Out you go!” Pedestrian seized by the collar and hurled into the arms of expectant porters, who speedily run him out of the station. The whole business is so instantaneous that we cannot help laughing at the poor fellow’s expulsion, and we are in the midst of our shout when—the officials having withdrawn—one of the pugilists lifts up his railway rug, and the bleary-eyed little man creeps out from underneath the seat! Neither I nor my two friends had seen him disappear, and we stared in wonder at the narrow compass in which he had packed himself, and the marvellously quick way in which he had hidden. He is thoroughly civil and frank; tells us he was determined to see the fight; that he would not have minded giving ten shillings for his ticket, but could not scrape together the three pounds; and then he gave us an account of his intrusion into the railway—how he climbed up ladders and dragged them after him, crossed roofs, dropped down walls, and finally crept under the long line of carriages and made his entry through the window; after hearing which, I have a much meaner opinion of Latitude’s escape from the Bastille, and think that my bleary-eyed friend really deserved his trip.

It is very nearly six o’clock before the train moves out of the station, and the patience of those who arrived at three has been severely tried. But there has been no outbreak, and, indeed, the whole proceedings have been carried on with perfect quietude. Once off, we rattle along at capital speed, and almost before we expect it find ourselves alongside the platform at Redhill Junction, listening to the porters calling out the name of the station in their ordinary manner. This is evidently a portion of the entire “gag.” We are an excursion-train, of whose object the Railway Company is, of course, entirely ignorant; to ensure our proper safety at London Bridge, the police were engaged; and now, as some of

us may perhaps be anxious to alight at Redhill, the porters give us all due information. But nobody gets out, although numberless heads are protruded through carriage-windows to stare at five members of the Surrey constabulary, who are grinning on the platform ; and we speed away once more. Some distance farther down we strike off the main line towards Tunbridge, and the pugilistic gentleman who was “fresh” at starting, and whom frequent applications to a brandy-flask have made very convivial, is earnest in his offers to “take ten to one they’ll fight in the same place as Sayers and Heenan did”—nobody responding, he takes refuge in sleep. Onward still, through the lovely fresh dawn, which is first a rift in a black cloud, and gradually broadens into a flood of rosy light, so lovely that the attention of all my fellow-travellers is excited, and the pugilists break out into raptures of admiration ; a saying of one of them that it’s “like a picture” being capped by one of the nondescript men, who says, “There’s no artist like Nater—none of ‘em could touch that!” On, with the growing day, through Kent—that lovely English garden, where the furrowed land lies in purple gloaming, where the stacked hop-poles stand black against the horizon, where the leafless woods fringe the blue hills, and the lazy cattle are here and there pastern-deep in the flooded fields. On, past a hitherto unheard-of little place called Frant, to an equally unknown station called Wadhurst, where we stop, our journey at an end. No fear of official interruption at present, at all events ; for there is not a soul near us, and the little station-tavern, unexpectant of eleven hundred visitors, is tight closed. In a long straggling line we excursionists start off at once down a red-clay lane ; and then for the first time I have opportunity of observing the material of which we are composed. I don’t think there are a dozen “roughs” in the entire company, and even they are so outnumbered as to be on their best behaviour ; swells muster

strongly ; the faces which you are accustomed to see at the Opera and in the Park can be counted by dozens ; a few theatrical people, a few authors, a few reporters, some fifty professional pugilists engaged as ring-keepers and all armed with long gutta-percha riding-whips, crowds of heavy-footed broad-shouldered yeomen (seduced from the cattle-show), and hundreds of sporting publicans and tradesmen. Now do we in gaiters congratulate ourselves on our forethought, for the loam is heavy and sticky, and soon we leave the lane and enter a field, where apparently our pitch is to be made. Hither among us arrives a man laden with camp-stools, with which he drives a brisk trade, retailing them at ten shillings apiece : I do not purchase, for I still retain my hamper-lid, on the possession of which I have received frequent congratulations from unknown gentlemen, who characterise my having brought it as a “*reg’lar leery move.*” After half-an-hour’s waiting, it is discovered that, for some reason unknown to me, the field which we occupy is not suitable ; and then commences a regular steeple-chase, over ploughed land, through stiff hedges and over swollen dykes, until at length we arrive at a sloping field at the ridge of a hill, where the ropes and stakes are extracted from the sacks in which they have been conveyed, and the formation of the ring commences in earnest.

At this moment, I and some hundreds of others are guilty of great weakness in purchasing, at the price of ten shillings, an “inner-ring ticket,” which is supposed to confer on us certain privileges of comfort and security. As it is, we discover, when the ropes and stakes are fixed, that there is no outer ring, or if there be, there is no one in it, every one crowding into the first circle, immediately round the fighting-ring, whether they have tickets or not : indeed, one on either side of me are two country joskins in smock-frocks and soft wide-awakes, who have walked over from an adjacent field. The stakes of the fighting-ring, painted

blue, and adorned at the top with the “colours” or “arms” of the respective Millers, look like gigantic constables’ staves ; from one to the other strong ropes are knotted, making a square area of about twenty-four feet. And now, with very great trouble, and with much show of assault but without any actual molestation, the ring-keepers have driven everyone from the fighting-ring, and the crowd, some squatting on the ground, some seated on their camp-stools, others standing in dense masses behind, and others again mounted in trees and on ladders propped against the hedges, begins to murmur with expectation. Betting, of which there have been mutterings all along, now breaks forth in shouts, and keen-eyed men are betting long odds, which they offer to lay on the American. In the space of three minutes I hear two bets of two hundred pounds to one, and thirty-five to twenty, all on Heenan. Now a roar ! What is it ? Brayvo, Tom ! Hooray, King ! and I look up and see a tall man stepping into the ring, and bowing to his welcome. A good-looking man this, with nothing of the prize-fighter in his face, which yet has a singular and almost sinister expression, owing to the vast development of the frontal bones and the smallness and shiftiness of his eyes. Another roar ! Brayvo, Jack ! a tremendous shout this time greets Mr. Heenan, who grins confidently, and makes a sort of mock salute. Both men are together now, tossing for choice of position. The toss is won by Heenan, who, of course, chooses the higher ground, where he has also the advantage of the sun at his back. In pursuance of this arrangement, King comes to the corner where I stand ; his seconds place his chair, and, so soon as he is seated, wrap him all round in a large green rug. He sits perfectly passive, his face immobile, his enormous brown hands occasionally pulling the rug tighter round him. In the opposite corner, so surrounded that I cannot see him, is his adversary. But I don’t want to see him yet ; I have quite enough to do in

looking at a middle-sized man, dressed in a fantastic yellow-silk jacket, with Heenan's gaudy-striped "colours" round his neck, and a close-fitting fur-cap on his head ; a man with a flat nose, an enormous jowl, and a face altogether like a slack-baked quartern loaf of dirty dough—Tom Sayers. He is acting as one of Heenan's seconds, and has, it is said, backed him for a great deal of that money which the English people subscribed for the courageous Thomas after his fight at Farnborough. A tremendous wrangle is going on all this time in the ring ; the editor of the sporting newspaper, unable to attend himself, has appointed my friend Determination to act as referee, and this is objected to by King's party, who with frightful language declare they will not have him in that capacity. The row is tremendous, awful threats are used, sticks and fists are raised ; and at this time Determination shows himself in his true character. While fifty yelling scoundrels are bawling at and threatening him, he stands perfectly unmoved, save perhaps that he thrusts on his hat a little tighter, and clenches that under-jaw a little more firmly ; but he never flinches from word or threat, and tells King that if he is not fighting in twenty minutes, he, Determination, as referee, will give the day in favour of the other man. This threat—which he has, it appears, the power to carry out—has proper effect, and King's friends yield ; one of them, in a loud voice, swearing that if the referee don't act fair he'll be murdered. 'This pleasant piece of badinage I heard uttered.

The ring is once more cleared of all save the Millers and their seconds, and the excitement recommences. Greeted by a loud burst of applause, Heenan steps forward. He is stripped to the waist, wearing drawers fastening at the knee, long stockings, and ankle-jack boots with spiked soles. I suppose a finer picture of a man has scarcely ever been seen. As he draws himself up with somewhat of a swagger, and holds his arms aloft in the air, you can see horny

muscle working like steel beneath his skin, which is hard, brown, and polished like hickory. In another minute a shout of welcome is given to King, who stands up in similar guise. He is nearly an inch taller than Heenan, who stands 6 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$, but he weighs a stone less than the American, and he looks greyhoundy and thin, as though his training had been a little too fine. Now they shake hands rapidly, and fall into position.

I have never before seen a prize-fight, but I am an old attendant at the sparring-schools, and have some practical as well as theoretical knowledge of the "noble art ;" and it strikes me at once that Mr. Heenan is sadly ignorant of the proper way to use his hands. In the first round he showed this, and also exposed his course of tactics, which was to wrestle with his antagonist, to hug him, and—if the truth must be told—to break his neck. Heenan wrestles splendidly ; his grip is something tremendous, and he hurled King about with a force and ease that was surprising. Heenan's backers were enthusiastic, and called out that the fight was as good as over. It was curious to watch the two men throughout the contest. Heenan always first up to time, and, during all the first rounds, smiling, confident, and swaggering : King very anxious-looking, with knit brows to shade his eyes from the sun, and close-set teeth. King fought, Heenan wrestled ; King fought him off, Heenan gripped him again and again, and after each grip threw him heavily to the ground. Meanwhile the shouts from the spectators were terrific : immediately behind me stood a raving knot of Heenan's friends, who, not content with cheering their champion, heaped clouds of invective and ridicule on his adversary. When King got one tremendous fall—so tremendous that he lay without motion, even when carried to his corner, and I thought he was dead—these ruffians jeered him with twofold fury ; and even that incarnation of English virtue, Mr. Thomas Sayers, turned round,

and pointing at the senseless body, uttered some graceful sarcasm. But King revived, partly through the application of a bowl of water to his head, partly through another application of a more practical nature, and with his revival came new fortune. All throughout, his friends had been urging him to keep Heenan off, and to make him fight ; and now he took the advice. In the next round he struck Heenan a blow into which he had put all his strength, and in delivering which he seemed to concentrate his pent-up rage and humiliation. It did its work ; utterly devoid of science, Heenan made no attempt to stop it, and it told on his whole frame. He came up again, time after time, with a pluck and endurance which cannot be too highly praised ; but he was all abroad ; the play of his hands was feeble in the extreme, and he was prevented from attempting his old tactics of gripping and hugging by King's powerful fists, which were shooting out all round him with the force of steam-hammers. Heenan was too courageous ; he should have given in at least two rounds before the sponge was thrown up and King declared the victor, after a fiercely-contested fight, lasting thirty-five minutes.

So ended my first and last experience of the mysteries of the Millers and their men. I never wish to attend another celebration ; but in all honesty I am bound to say that what I did see was by no means so horrifying, so lowering, so disgusting, as before and since I heard it described. When I read the account of what I had seen, in the next day's *Times*, I really wondered which I ought to believe—my own eyesight or the vivid description of *The Times* reporter !

CHAPTER XXI.

CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION.

I WAS staying out of town by the sea, where I always do my own marketing ; and, as the buttermen made a little funnel of paper in which to enclose my two new-laid eggs, I saw a roll of yellow manuscript in faded ink lying in the drawer. “What’s that ?” I asked. “Waste,” he replied. “May I look at it ?” “Welcome ;” and he brought it out. A large roll of extra-size law-paper, marked outside “Old Bailey, July Session, 1782 ; Middlesex. The King against George Weston and Joseph Weston, for felony. Brief for the prosecutor.”

“Where did you get this ?” I asked. “Come with the rest,” he said ; “pounds of it downstairs ; nigh enough to fill my back cellar !” It was very tempting. I had no books save the half-dozen I had brought with me, and which I knew by heart ; the evenings were dull and showery ; I was getting horribly bored for want of something to read. “Will you sell me this roll of paper ?” said I. “No ; I’ll gie ‘em to ye,” was his spirited response.

I carried the roll of paper home, and saw my landlady glance at it with undisguised horror as she observed it under my arm. Then, after I had dined, and the evening, as usual, had turned out showery, and nobody was left on the esplanade save the preventive man, wrapped in his oilskin coat, wearing

his sou'-wester hat, and always looking through his telescope for something which never arrived—I lighted my reading-candles, feathery with the corpses of self-immolated moths, and proceeded to look over my newly-found treasure. Very old, very yellow, very flyblown. Here is the heading of the first side: “Old Bailey. July Session, 1782. For Felony. Brief for the prosecution” (each item underscored), in the left-hand corner. In the right-hand, and kept together by a pen-and-ink coupling figure, “The King——” (so grand that they could not put anybody else in the same line, and are obliged to fill it up with a long stroke) “against George Weston, o’rwise Samuel Watson, and Joseph Weston, o’rwise Joseph Williams Weston, o’rwise William Johnson.” Then follow six-and-twenty counts of indictment, and then comes the “case,” whence I cull the facts of the story I am about to tell.

Between two and three o’clock on the morning of Monday, the 29th of January, 1781, the mail-cart bringing what was called the Bristol mail, with which it had been laden at Maidenhead, and which it should eventually have deposited at the London General Post-office, then in Lombard-street, was jogging easily along towards Cranford Bridge, between the eleventh and twelfth milestone, when the post-boy, a sleepy-headed and sickly young fellow (he died very shortly after the robbery), was wakened by the sudden stopping of his horses. Opening his eyes, he found himself confronted by a single highwayman, who presented a pistol at his head, and bade him get down from the cart. Half asleep, and considerably more than half terrified, the boy obeyed, slipped down, and glared vacantly about him. The robber, seeing some indecision in his young friend’s face, kindly recalled him to himself by touching his forehead with the cold barrel of the pistol, then ordered him to return back towards Cranford Bridge, and not to look round if he valued his life. Such a store did the poor

boy place upon this commodity, which even then was daily slipping from him, that he implicitly obeyed the robber's directions, and never turned his head until he reached the post-office at Hounslow, where he made up for lost time by giving a lusty alarm.

Hounslow Heath being at that time a very favourite spot for highway robberies, it was by no means uncommon for the denizens of Hounslow town to be roused out of their beds with stories of attack. On this occasion, finding that the robbers had had the impudence to lay their sacrilegious hands on his Majesty's mail, the Hounslowians turned out with a will, and were speedily scouring the country in different directions. Those who went towards the place where the boy had been stopped hit upon the right scent. They tracked the wheels of the cart on the road leading from the great high road to Heston, and thence to the Uxbridge road, a short distance along that road towards London, and then along a branch-road to the left leading to Ealing Common, about a mile from which, in a field at a distance of eight or ten miles from where the boy was robbed, lay the mail-cart, thrown on its side and gutted of its contents. The bags from Bath and Bristol for London had been rifled, many of the letters had been broken open, the contents taken away, and the outside covers were blowing about the field. About twenty-eight letter-bags had been carried off bodily; some distance down the field was found the Reading letter-bag, rifled of its contents. Expresses were at once sent off to head-quarters; consternation in the City was very great; and advertisements, giving an account of the robbery and offering a reward, were immediately printed, and distributed throughout the kingdom.

About nine o'clock on Tuesday morning, the 30th of January (before any account of the robbery could have arrived at Nottingham), a post-chaise rattled into the yard

of the Black Moor's Head in that town, and a gentleman in a naval uniform alighted and requested to be shown to a room. In this room he had scarcely settled himself, before he rang the bell, and despatched the waiter to the bank of Messrs. Smith to obtain cash for several Bristol bills which he handed to him. Messrs. Smith declining these bills without some further statement, the gentleman in the naval uniform started forth himself, and called at the counting-house of Messrs. Wright, old-established bankers in Nottingham, where he requested cash for a bank post-bill, No. 11,062, dated 10th of January, 1781, payable to Matthew Humphrys, Esq., and duly endorsed by Matthew Humphrys, but by no one else. Mr. Wright, the senior partner, peered over his gold spectacles at the gentleman in the naval uniform, and wished to know if he were Mr. Humphrys? As the naval gentleman replied in the negative, Mr. Wright requested him to endorse the bill, which the naval gentleman did, writing "James Jackson" in a rather feeble and illiterate scrawl, but receiving cash for his bill. Immediately on his return to the hotel, the naval gentleman ordered a post-chaise and left Nottingham on an agreeable trip to Mansfield, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Leeds, Wakefield, Tadcaster, York, Northallerton, Darlington, Durham, Newcastle, and Carlisle; at each and every one of which places—such were his needs—the naval gentleman had to go to the bankers, and obtain cash for bills which he presented. Leaving Carlisle, he departed by the direct road for London, and was not heard of for some days.

But so soon as the government advertisement arrived in Nottingham, the ingenious Mr. Wright was suddenly struck with an idea, and concluded (by a remarkable exercise of his intellectual forces) that the naval gentleman and the robber of the mail-cart were one and the same person. So he caused handbills descriptive of the naval gentleman's appearance to be printed and circulated, and he sent out

several persons in pursuit of the purloiner of his hundred pounds. Amongst other places, a number of handbills were sent to Newark by stage-coach on Thursday, the 1st of February, addressed to Mr. Clarke, the postmaster, who also kept the Saracen's Head Inn. Unfortunately this parcel was not opened until about noon on Friday, the 2nd of February; but the moment Mr. Clarke read one of the notices, he recollects that a gentleman in naval uniform had, about four hours before, arrived from Tuxford at his house in a chaise and four, had got change from him for a bank-note of £25, and had immediately started in another chaise and four for Grantham.

Now was a chance to catch the naval gentleman before he reached London, and an instant pursuit was commenced; but the devil stood his friend so far, for he reached town about three hours before his pursuers. His last change was at Enfield Highway, whence a chaise and four carried him to town, and set him down in Bishopsgate Street between ten and eleven on Friday night. The postboys saw him get into a hackney-coach, taking his pistols and portmanteau with him; but they could not tell the number of the coach, nor where he directed the coachman to drive.

Having thus traced the highwayman to London, of course no one could then dream of taking any further steps towards his apprehension without consulting "the public office, Bow Street," in the matter; and at the public office, Bow Street, the affair was placed in the hands of one Mr. John Clark, who enjoyed great reputation as a clever "runner." Mr. John Clark's first act was to issue a reward for the appearance of the hackney-coachman; an act which was so effectual that, on Monday morning, there presented himself at Bow Street an individual named James Perry, who said that he was the coachman in question, and deposed that the person whom he had conveyed in his coach the Friday night preceding was one George Weston,

whom he well knew, having been a fellow-lodger of his at the sign of the Coventry Arms in Potter's Fields, Tooley Street, about four months ago. He also said that Weston ordered him to drive to the first court on the left hand in Newgate Street, where he set him down; Weston walking through the court with his portmanteau and pistols under his arm. Further information than this James Perry could not give. On Tuesday, the 6th of February, a coat and waistcoat, similar to those worn by the naval gentleman implicated in these transactions, were found in "Pimlico river, near Chelsea Waterworks," by one John Sharp; and finally, Mr. Clark, of the public office, Bow Street, in despair at his want of success, advertised George Weston by name. But, although a large number of notes and bills were "put off" or passed between that time and the month of November, not the least trace could be had of him. Mr. Clark, of the public office, Bow Street, owned himself done at last; and so, in the pleasant round of highway robberies, foot-paderies, burglaries, and murders, the affair was almost forgotten.

In the middle of the month of October, a gentleman, dressed (of course) in the height of the mode, entered the shop of Messrs. Elliott and Davis, upholsterers, in New Bond Street, accompanied by an intimate friend, whom he addressed as Mr. Samuel Watson. The gentleman's own name was William Johnson; he had, as he informed the upholsterers, recently taken a house and some land near Winchelsea, and he wished them to undertake the furnishing of his house. The upholsterers, like cautious tradesmen, requested "a reference;" which Mr. Johnson at once gave them in Mr. Hanson, a tradesman residing also in New Bond Street. Mr. Hanson, on being applied to, said that Mr. Johnson had bought goods of him to the amount of £70, and had paid ready money. Messrs. Elliott and Davis were perfectly satisfied, and professed their readiness

to execute Mr. Johnson's orders. Mr. Johnson's orders to the upholsterers were to "let him have everything suitable for a man of £500 a year, an amount which he possessed in estates in Yorkshire, independent of the allowance made to him by his father, who had been an eminent attorney in Birmingham, but had retired upon a fortune of £2,000 a year." Elliott and Davis took Mr. Johnson at his word, and completed the order in style; then, about the middle of January the junior partner started for Winchelsea, and took the bill with him. Like a prudent man he put up at the inn, and made inquiries about his debtor. Nothing could be more satisfactory. Mr. Johnson lived with the best people of the county; Mr. Johnson went everywhere, and was a most affable, liberal, pleasant gentleman. So when Mr. Davis saw Mr. Johnson, and that affable gentleman begged him, as a personal favour, to defer the presentation of his little account until March, he at once concurred, and returned to London, to give Elliott a glowing account of his reception, and to inspire him with a certain amount of jealousy that he—Elliott—had not taken the account himself. March came, but Johnson's money came not: instead thereof a letter from Johnson, stating that his rents would be due on the 25th of that month, that he did not like to hurry his tenants, but that he would be in town the first or second week in April, and discharge the bill. Reading this epistle, Elliott looked stern, and was secretly glad he had *not* been to Winchelsea; while Davis, glancing over it, was secretly sorry he had said so much.

While the partners were in this state, in the second week of April, no money having in the meantime been forthcoming, enter to them a neighbour, Mr. Timothy Lucas, jeweller, who gives them good-day, and then wants to know their opinion of one Mr. Johnson, of Winchelsea. "Why?" asked the terrified upholsterers. Simply because he had given their firm as reference to the jeweller, who

had already sold him, on credit, goods to the amount of £130, and had just executed an order for £800 worth of jewellery, which was then packed and ready to be sent to Winchelsea. Now consternation reigned in New Bond Street. Johnson's debts to Elliott and Davis were above £370; to Lucas above £130. Immediate steps must be adopted; so writs were at once taken out, and the London tradesmen, accompanied by a sheriff's officer, set out to Winchelsea to meet their defrauder.

Early on Monday morning, the 15th of April, as they were passing through Rye, on their way, they observed Mr. Johnson and his intimate friend Mr. Samuel Watson coming towards them on horseback, escorting a chariot, within which were two ladies, and behind which was a groom on horseback. Davis, the trusting, conscious of having temporarily nourished a snake in his upholstering bosom, pointed out Johnson to the sheriff's officer, who immediately rode up to arrest him, and was as immediately knocked down by Johnson with the butt-end of his riding-whip. The tradesmen rushed to their officer's assistance, but Johnson and Watson beat them off; and Watson, drawing a pistol, swore he would blow their brains out. This so checked the upholstering ardour, that Johnson and Watson managed to escape, returned in great haste to Winchelsea, where they packed their plate and valuables, and made off at full speed across country, leaving directions for the ladies to follow them to London in the chariot.

Clearly the London tradesmen were nonplussed; clearly the thing for them to do was, to consult with the mayor and principal tradesmen of the town; clearly the place for the consultation was the coffee-room of the Nag's Head. In a corner of this coffee-room lay a ne'er-do-well, a pot-house loiterer, a tap-room frequenter, a man with the reputation of having once had brains which he had muddled

away with incessant brandy-and-water. “Jack” he was called ; and if he had one peculiarity besides brandy-and-water, which was scarcely a peculiarity in Rye, it was his intense interest in all criminal matters. So, the tradesmen talked, and Jack listened, until they had given a description of the person of Mr. William Johnson, when Jack went away to the den which he called home, and, returning, requested to hear Mr. Johnson’s appearance again described. Mr. Davis, the junior partner, looking upon Jack as a harmless lunatic, complied with the request. Jack gave a yell of delight, and, producing from under his ragged coat the hand-bill issued from the public office, Bow Street, speedily showed that Mr. Johnson, of Winchelsea, and George Weston, the mail-robber, were one and the same person.

No sooner proved than action taken. Off goes an express to the post-office. Mr. John Clark is torn from the bosom of his family and summoned to the public office, whence he despatches trusty satellites, with the result that Mr. Johnson, with his intimate friend Mr. Watson, are traced from various places to an hotel in Noel Street, near Wardour Street, Soho, where they slept on Tuesday night. Early on Wednesday morning, indefatigable Mr. John Clark, duly apprised, is at the door of the Noel Street hotel, relates to the landlord his errand, and requests the landlord’s assistance ; which the landlord refuses. Clark sends a bystander off to Bow Street for assistance, and the landlord proceeds to caution his guests, who immediately take alarm, and come slouching downstairs with their hands in their pockets. Clark, who is standing at the door, does not like their attitude, thinks it safest to let them pass, but as soon as they are fairly in the street, gives the alarm, “Stop thief ! Stop mail robbers !” Out rushes a crowd in hot pursuit—pursuit which is temporarily checked by Messrs. Johnson and Watson each producing a brace of pistols, and

firing three shots at their followers ; but at last they are both captured.

So far my yellow-leaved, fly-blown, faded brief-sheets, which tell me, moreover, that George Weston and Joseph Weston are the Johnson and Watson of the Winchelsea drama ; that they will be proved to be brothers ; that George Weston will be proved to be the highwayman, and Joseph the receiver ; and that there is a perfect cloud of witnesses ready to prove every indictment. I suppose they did prove it ; for, turning back to the first outside folio, I find, in a different handwriting and a later ink, “ Guilty ”—to be hanged at Tyburn—May 3 ; and later still I see an ink-cross, which, from official experience, I know to be a record that the last memorandum had been carried out, and that the papers might be put by.

CHAPTER XXII.

CASE FOR THE PRISONER.

At six o'clock on Monday morning, the 29th of January, 1827, the Dover mail-coach, mud-bespattered and travel-stained, pulled up before the General Post Office in Lombard Street, and the official porters in attendance flung themselves upon it, and dragged from it the receptacle for letters (then containing correspondence from France, from foreign countries transmitting through France, and from Dover itself), which, in official language, was known as the mail-portmanteau. The guard, cold, stiff, and tired, tumbled off his perch, stamped his feet on the pavement, yawned, stretched himself, and literally "lent a hand" towards the removal of the mail-portmanteau by just touching it in its descent with his four fingers; the coachman, also cold, stiff, and tired, let his benumbed left hand give to the motion of the four jaded horses, which, dank and steaming, stretched their necks, and yawned about with their heads, and shook their bodies, rattling their harness in a dismal manner. All the passengers had dismounted long ago, the guard had stepped inside the office to settle some little matter in connection with the way-bill, the few stragglers always waiting about to see the coaches come in had been cheaply edified and were moving off, the coachman had jerked the horses' heads into the air preparatory to walking them round to the

stable, when a pale-faced clerk with a pen behind his ear came rushing out of the little side-door, tumbling over the guard, and exclaiming, "Hold hard, for God's sake ! The mail has been robbed !"

When the two official porters carried the mail-portmanteau into the Foreign Office of the General Post Office, they placed it before the clerk waiting to receive it. There was little time to count and sort and despatch the letters ; the clerk knew that in order to get through his work he must have quick eyes and nimble fingers ; and in a minute he had unbuckled the straps of the square portmanteau and thrown them back, preparatory to opening the two compartments, when in each of the compartments he saw a long cut, as with a knife, large enough to admit of the enclosed bags being drawn out. Rather staggered at this, the clerk hastily turned all the bags out on to the floor, noticing as he did so that several of them were cut and frayed. Then he looked for the Paris letter-bill, which he found in due course, and read as follows : "No. 203. Direction Générale des Postes de France. Départ de Paris pour Londres, ce Vendredi, 26 Janvier, année 1827. Le contenu de votre dernière dépêche du 24^{me} a été exactement distribué, et ultérieurement expédié pour sa destination : l'administration vous demande le même soin pour le contenu de la présente du reçu, de laquelle vous voudrez bien lui donner avis." Then followed a list of the bags and their weights, from France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, and Turkey. The clerk carefully compared the bill in his hand with the bags lying before him, and instantly found that the Italian bag, the heaviest, and probably therefore the most valuable, was missing.

The pale-faced clerk, rushing out and communicating this fact to the coachman and overturned guard (when he was picked up) of the Dover mail-coach, had the satisfaction of seeing their rubicund countenances turn to his own hue ;

but with that he was obliged to remain content, as they merely invoked different species of condemnation on various portions of their anatomy if they knew anything about it, or could tell how it occurred. So the Dover mail-coach went round to its stables. That night, when the return Dover mail left the Elephant and Castle, it had for one of its inside passengers the solicitor to the General Post Office ; a man of clear head and prompt action, to whom the investigation of delicate matters connected with the postal service was confided. To him, comfortably installed at the Ship Hotel, came the postmaster of Calais and the captain of the *Henri Quatre*, the French packet by which the mail had been brought over. After a little consultation, these gentlemen were clearly of opinion that the mail arrived intact at Calais, was sent thence and arrived intact at Dover, was sent thence intact, and was violated on the road to London. Tending to the proof of this was a special circumstance. When the mail arrived at Dover, it was so unusually heavy as to induce a Custom-house officer who saw it landed to regard it with suspicion ; so he accompanied the men who bore it, from the French vessel to the packet-agent's office, that he might see it opened, and be satisfied that it contained nothing prohibited. The portmanteau was unbuckled and its compartments were thrown open in the presence of this officer, of Sir Thomas Coates the packet-agent, and of three other persons, all of whom were certain that the compartments of the bags were in a perfect state, and that the bags were then uncut.

So far so good. In such cases proving a negative is the next best thing to a positive proof, because it shuts the gate and prevents your wandering in the wrong direction. So the solicitor to the Post Office, journeying back to London, and taking up the threads of his case on the way, stopped at Canterbury, made a few casual inquiries, pricked up his ears, opened a regular official investigation, and

received what he believed to be very important information. For it appeared that on the Sunday night of the robbery, four inside and three outside passengers left Dover by the mail-coach for London. The four insides were booked for London ; one of the outsides was booked for Chatham, another for Canterbury or as much farther towards London as he pleased, the third outside intimated that he should only go as far as Canterbury. When the mail reached the Fountain Inn, Canterbury, the outside passenger who was booked as far towards London as he pleased, got down and paid his fare, stating that he should go no farther ; the passenger who was booked for Canterbury alighted at the same time ; and the two walked away from the coach together.

One of the mail-coach proprietors, who resided at Canterbury, happened to be looking at the mail while it was standing at the door on the evening in question, and observed two men, dressed as if they had just left the coach, crossing the street. They stood consulting together for a few minutes, and, after walking about fifty yards, stopped again, when a third man joined them. They all conversed for about a minute, and then separated ; two of them went down the street on the road to London, the mail passed them, and almost immediately afterwards they returned up the street in the direction of the Rose Hotel. The third man went into the coach-office, booked himself as an outside passenger for London, and went on by the mail. Shortly after the mail passed through Canterbury that night, two strangers, coming from the direction in which the mail had gone, entered the Rose Hotel, and ordered a chaise to London. On being asked whether they would change horses at Ospringe or Sittingbourne, they said it was immaterial so long as they got on quickly. The waiter who showed them into a sitting-room noticed they had a small bag with them. They ordered some brandy-and-water and

shut themselves in—in the room, not the bag. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour the waiter, suddenly opening the door to say that the chaise was ready, perceived various letters (at least twenty or thirty), and several small paper packets, lying on the table; the men were feeling the letters, holding them up to the candles, and otherwise examining their contents. They appeared much confused when the waiter entered the room, crammed the letters into their pockets, paid their bill, got into the chaise, and at once set off for town.

The thieves were traced through different stages, until it was ascertained that they had been set down between six and seven o'clock on Monday morning near a watch-box in the Kent Road, and that, having paid the post-boy, they then walked off towards Surrey Square.

So much notice was taken of the men at the Rose Hotel, and at the places where they stopped to change horses and take refreshment on the road to town, that a description of their persons was procured, and the police communicated with. On hearing the description, the police at once considered that it implicated one Tom Partridge and one of his associates, who had been concerned in most of the coach-robberies which had recently been committed ; and private information having been obtained that these were really the men who had violated the mail, warrants were obtained, and Tom Partridge was "wanted." After a search of many weeks Tom Partridge was apprehended, and, on the examination which he underwent at Bow Street, was distinctly identified as one of the persons who booked an outside place at Dover by the mail of the evening in question, and as one of the men who were seen on the same evening at the Rose Hotel examining letters and packets which lay open before them. On this evidence Mr. Tom Partridge was fully committed for trial.

From March till August Mr. Tom Partridge lay in

prison: immediately on his committal, he had strongly denied his guilt, and had made application to be admitted to bail; but his request was refused. On the 21st of August, 1827, the assizes for the Home Circuit being then held in Maidstone, there was more than usual excitement round the old court-house of that town. Very many witnesses were to be examined on the part of the Crown, among them some French gentlemen, clerks in the Paris Post Office, and officers of the packet, who had been staying at the principal hotel of Maidstone for some days, and at the expense of the prosecution; who had lived very freely, and had winked at the cherry-cheeked Kentish damsels in a manner which had caused some of those young girls to clench their fists and hint at giving "furriners" that dread blow known as a "smack o' th' face." And above all else productive of interest was the prevalent belief that the whole case was one of extraordinary circumstantial evidence; that it would turn upon the nicest question of personal identity; and that the prisoner intended bringing forward undeniable proofs of his innocence.

So the cramped little court was crowded from floor to ceiling when the learned judge took his seat on the bench. Immediately below him sat the Post-Office solicitor, outwardly bland, but inwardly anxious: betraying his anxiety when there seemed any hitch in his case by repeated application to a massive gold snuff-box. From time to time he conferred with the Crown counsel on his right hand, and occasionally answered questions put to him by two old gentlemen on his left, London merchants and bankers. More than the average number of counsel (none appearing for the prisoner though) at the little green table appropriated to them, and though sitting with wigs cocked awry and employing themselves generally in the mastication of quill pens, yet paying more than usual attention to a case in which they were not concerned. All round the court,

wherever permissible, stood the eager public, stout broad-shouldered yeomen, buxom women, ostlers, and inn-yard loiterers, with occasionally among them the thin sallow face of a London “professional,” probably a friend of the prisoner, contrasting strongly with the acres of broad healthy red cheeks by which it was surrounded. The prisoner himself in the dock fronting my lord the judge, a middle-sized, stoutly-built man, with a queer humorous face, lighted by a twinkling arch blue eye. Not a bit daunted, but apparently rather pleased by the universal gaze, he stood leaning over the front of the dock, playing with the bits of herbs which custom still retained there, keenly observant of all that transpired, but apparently fully trusting in his own resources.

The judge settled himself in his seat, the usher demanded “Silence” at a moment when a pin might have been heard to drop, each juryman threw every scrap of intellect at his command into his countenance, the Post-Office solicitor took an enormous pinch of snuff, and Mr. Serjeant Strongbow, retained on behalf of the Crown, rose to address the court. He told the story briefly, pretty much as it has been here stated, and proceeded to call his witnesses. First came the French gentlemen. M. Etienne Bonheur, comptroller at the foreign office of the General Post Office, Paris, proved that he made up the mail for London on the evening of Friday, the 26th of January, that there was an Italian bag, that he handed them to M. Avier to despatch. M. Avier, M. Gustave d'Ortell, postmaster of Calais, Captain Margot, of the *Henri Quatre* steamer, John Nash, the Custom-house officer at Dover, and Sir T. Coates, the packet-agent, all deposed to the despatch and receipt of the mail in due course. Rather dull work this. So the judge thought, leaning back and biting his nails ; so the jury thought, listening in bucolic wonder to the translation of the French witnesses’ evidence by the interpreter, but

bored when it came out in English a mere matter of formal routine connected with the transmission of a mail ; so the prisoner thought, as he shifted from leg to leg, and smiled slightly once or twice, looking on with great unconcern. Booking-office keeper at Dover, mail-coachman, coach-proprietor at Canterbury, waiter and chambermaid at the Rose Hotel, waiters and ostlers all along the road, up they came one after the other, kissed the book, looked at the prisoner in the dock, and declared that he was the man who figured in their recollection as connected with the events of the night of the 28th of January. At the conclusion of this evidence, the court adjourns for refreshment ; judge goes out at a side-door ; prisoner wipes his forehead, and sits down by his guardian turnkey ; Post-Office solicitor takes a pinch of snuff, and receives congratulations of London bankers on manner in which evidence has been got together ; Serjeant Strongbow says, “ Seems clear case,” and commences sandwich.

After an interval of twenty minutes, the court resumed, Serjeant Strongbow intimated that the case for the prosecution was concluded, and the prisoner, called upon for his defence, humbly prayed that a written paper which he had prepared might be read aloud. The court assenting, the paper was handed to an officer, and was read aloud, to the following effect : In the first place, the prisoner denied any participation in the crime of which he was accused, and stated that in the month of January last he was travelling with a person of the name of Trotter, on business, in the counties of Somerset and Devon. That on Monday, the 22nd January, he and Trotter arrived at the George Inn, Glastonbury, kept by Mr. Booth. That they left The George the same day, and went to Mr. Baker's, who keeps an inn at Somerton, and thence in Mr. Baker's gig to Yeovil. That the prisoner, taking a fancy to the horse in this gig, sent word back to Mr. Baker, that if he had a

mind to sell it, he (prisoner) would meet him at the George Inn, Glastonbury, on the ball-night, the Thursday following. That on this Thursday night the prisoner and Trotter duly arrived at The George, bought Baker's horse for twelve guineas twelve shillings, borrowing the silver money from Booth, tried it on the Friday morning, and left it with Booth to get it into better condition. That he (prisoner) and Trotter left Glastonbury at half-past eleven on Saturday morning, the 27th, by the Exeter coach, which they quitted on the road about five miles from Tiverton, and walked on to that town. That at Tiverton they put up at the Three Tuns Hotel, and being cold, they called for and had some hot egg-beer on their arrival; and that while at this hotel, having a wish to procure some clotted cream, they inquired of the waiter how they should carry it, when the waiter recommended them to have two tin cans for the purpose, which cans were procured and filled accordingly. That they stayed at The Three Tuns during Saturday the 27th, and Sunday the 28th; and left on Monday the 29th, by the Bristol coach to Bridgewater.

This statement of the prisoner's having been read aloud, he was called upon to corroborate it by evidence. Thereupon he summoned and produced in the witness-box, one after the other, Booth, the landlord of The George at Glastonbury; Baker, of whom he bought the horse; Ellis, the waiter at The Three Tuns at Tiverton, who produced the book containing the entries of the refreshment had by the prisoner—among them the hot egg-beer, the clotted cream, and the tins for carrying it; and the chambermaid at the same inn. All of these persons exactly corroborated the prisoner's statement, and all of them swore positively to his identity. After the evidence of the last witness the judge interposed and asked the Crown counsel whether he desired to press his case? Serjeant Strongbow turned to the Post-Office solicitor, who, with a pinch of snuff suspended

in the air, was gravely shaking his head, when several of the jury expressed themselves satisfied that the witnesses for the prosecution were mistaken, and that the prisoner was not one of the persons who had committed the robbery. Whereupon a verdict of acquittal was recorded ; and with a smiling face and a bow to the court, Mr. Tom Partridge walked out of the dock a free man.

Some two years after this trial, which gave rise to a vast amount of wonder as to how the government could have been so mistaken as to prosecute an innocent man, the Post-Office solicitor, wending his way quietly along Bishopsgate Street to catch the Norwood coach at the Flower-pot Inn, was brushed against by a man going into a public-house, and looking up, saw that the man was Tom Partridge. Now, in Mr. Solicitor's leisure moments, which were few enough, he had often thought of Tom Partridge, and had puzzled his brain ineffectually for a solution of Tom Partridge's mystery. So now, having a few minutes to spare, he first satisfied himself that the man who had brushed against him was the veritable Tom, and then crossed the street and took a careful survey of the public-house into which Tom had vanished. As he stood looking up at the house Tom came out of the street-door, looked up, and called "Hi!" whereupon, from an upper window of the house, appeared the head and shoulders of another Tom, an exact reproduction of the original Tom, middle-sized, stoutly built, with a queer humorous face lighted by a twinkling arch blue eye. Mr. Solicitor rubbed his eyes and took a stinging pinch of snuff; but when he looked again, there were the two Tom Partridges, exactly alike, one on the pavement in the street, the other looking out of the third-floor window. Then both disappeared into the house, whence presently emerging both by the street-door, one pointed to some distant object, and the other started

off up the street, the first returning into the public-house ; each so exactly like the other, that, when they separated, they looked like halves of one body.

Mr. Solicitor took a short joyous pinch, rubbed his hands slowly, and went off to the Flower-pot Inn. That evening he had several extra glasses of a peculiarly fine brown sherry which he only drank on special occasions ; and Mrs. Solicitor remarked to the Misses Solicitor that she thought father must have had a very good case on somewhere, he was in such spirits. Next morning Mr. Solicitor was closeted for half an hour with one of the heads of the Post-Office department who had the official conduct of criminal cases ; and shortly afterwards a confidential messenger was despatched with a letter to William Barker, otherwise known as Conkey Barker, otherwise as Bill the Nobbler, otherwise as sundry and divers flash personages.

That evening Mr. La Trappe, of the General Post Office, sat in the study of his private house in Brunswick Square. On the desk before him stood his despatch-box, a cutting from a newspaper, a lawyer's brief with some official tape-tied papers. A case-bottle of brandy, a tumbler, and a water-bottle, stood on the corner of the desk. As the clock struck eight, the servant entered and announced "a man." The man being admitted proved very velveteeny, slightly stably, and very bashful.

"Sit down, Barker," said Mr. La Trappe, pointing to a chair. "I sent for you, because I discovered that the last time you were here you left something behind you——"

"The devil !" burst out Mr. Barker.

"Oh, don't fear," said Mr. La Trappe, smiling gently, and looking at him with a peculiar glance, "it was only this letter. You needn't open it; you'll find that it's all right."

Mr. Barker took the letter with some misgiving ; then a light gradually dawning on him he crumpled it softly in his

palm ; a responsive crinkling of crisp enclosure fell upon his ear, and he chuckled as he said: "All right, sir ; I'm fly !"

"Mix yourself a glass of grog, Barker," said Mr. La Trappe, pointing to the case-bottle. "You've entirely left the profession, I believe ?"

"Entirely, sir."

"And are leading an honest life ?"

"Reg'lar slap-up 'spectable mechanic," said Barker.

"I want a little information from you ; it can't hurt anybody, as the affair is bygone and blown. Do you recollect the robbery of the Dover mail ?"

"*I* should think so," said Barker, grinning very much.

"Ah !" said Mr. La Trappe. "We tried a man named Tom Partridge for it, and he was acquitted on an alibi. He did it, of course ?"

"Of course," said Barker.

"Ah !" said Mr. La Trappe again, with perfect calmness ; "he has a double, who went into Somerset and Devon at the same time, and worked the oracle for him ?"

"Well! How *did* you find that out ?"

"Never mind, Barker, how I found it out. What I want to know is—who is the double ?"

"Tom Partridge's brother—old Sam, one year older nor Tom, and as like him as two peas. It was the best rig o' the sort as ever was rigged. Old Sam had been out in Ameriky all his life, and when he first came back, everyone was talking about his likeness to Tom ; you couldn't know 'em apart. Fiddy, the fence, thought something might be made of this, and he planned the whole job—the egg-hot, and the cream, the tins, and the horse what he bought. Tom's got that horse now, to drive in his shay-cart on Sundays, and he calls him 'Walker.'"

"Walker !" said Mr. La Trappe ; "what does he call him Walker for ?"

"Walker's a slang name for a postman," explained Mr. Barker, in great delight. "Worn't it per-rime?"

"Oh!" said Mr. La Trappe, with great gravity, "I perceive. One more question, Barker; how was the robbery effected? The interior of the portmanteau could not have been cut unless it had been unbuckled and the compartments thrown open, and they could not possibly have done all that on the top of the coach. Besides, the guard stated he had fastened it in a very peculiar manner at Dover, and that the fastenings were in exactly the same state when he opened it in London."

"Ah! That was the best game of the lot," said Mr. Barker. "The job was done while the portmanteau was in the agent's office at Dover, and where it lay from three o'clock on Sunday afternoon till between seven and eight in the evening. Tom Partridge and his pal they opened the street-door with a skeleton key; there was no one there, and they had plenty of time to work it."

"And Tom Partridge's pal was——?"

"Ah, that I can't say," said Mr. Barker, looking straight into the air. "I never heard tell o' *his* name."

"Thanks, Barker; that'll do," said Mr. La Trappe, rising. "Good-night! You've done no harm. I shall know where to find you if ever I want you again."

About a twelvemonth afterwards that slap-up respectable mechanic, Mr. William Barker, was hanged for horse-stealing. Just before his execution he sent for Mr. La Trappe, and confessed that *he* had been Tom Partridge's accomplice in the robbery of the Dover mail. Mr. La Trappe thanked him for the information, but bore it like a man who could bear a surprise.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PINCHER ASTRAY.

HE was not handsome—at least in the common acceptation of the term. He had a speckly muzzle, and a hanging jowl, and rather watery eyes, and short crop ears. His legs were horribly bowed, and his tail curled over his back like the end of a figure of nine. He was a morose beast, and of most uncertain temper. He would rush out to a stranger at the gate with every demonstration of welcome, would leap up and bark round him, and then would run behind and bite him in the calves. He was the terror of the tradespeople : he loathed the butcher; he had a deadly hatred for the fishmonger's boy ; and, when I complained to the post-office of the non-receipt in due course of a letter from my aunt's legal adviser advising me to repair at once to the old lady's death-bed (owing to which non-receipt I was cut out of my aunt's will), I was answered that “the savage character of my dog—a circumstance with which the department could not interfere—prevented the letter-carrier from the due performance of his functions after nightfall.” Still I loved Pincher—still I love him ! What though my trousers-ends were frayed into hanging strips by his teeth ; what though my slippers are a mass of chewed pulp ; what though he has tousled all the corners of the manuscript of my work on Logarithms—shall I reproach him now that he is lost to me ? Never !

I saw him last, three mornings ago, leisurely straying round the garden with the strap of the baby's shoe hanging out of his mouth, and with a knowing wag of his tail, as much as to show me how he was enjoying himself. I remonstrated with him on the shoe question, and he seemed somewhat touched for a moment; but suddenly catching sight of a predatory cat on the wall, he galloped off without further parley. I watched the cat scuttle up a tree; I heard Pincher growling angrily at its base; the noise of the milkman's boots scrunching the gravel attracted his attention. He darted off, and was lost to me for ever. There was a fiendish grin on the housemaid's face when she announced to me that Pincher wasn't nowhere to be found. Visions of henceforth unworried stocking-heels, unsnapped-at ankles, rose before that damsel's mind as she broke the news; and she smiled as she said they'd looked everywheres, they had, and nothin' wasn't to be seen. I was not crushed by the intelligence. I knew my dog's extensive visiting-list, and thought that, finding he had overstayed his time, he had probably accepted the friendly hospitality of half a kennel, and was then engaged in baying the moon, and conducting to the sleeplessness of a neighbourhood unaccustomed to his vocal powers. But, as I lay in bed in the morning, I missed the various little dramas—the principal characters played by Pincher and the tradespeople—of which I had long been the silent audience. The butcher's boy—a fierce and beefy youth, who openly defied the dog, and waved him off with hurlings of his basket and threatenings of his feet, accompanied by growls of “*Git out, yer beast!*”—now entered silently; the baker's apprentice, a mild and farinaceous lad—who proffered to Pincher the raspings of black loaves, and usually endeavoured to propitiate his enemy by addressing him as “*Poor fellow!*”—now entered silently; the fishmonger—who generally made one wild scuttle from the garden-gate to the kitchen-entrance, and upon whose

track Pincher usually hung as the wolves hung upon Mazeppa's—now walked slowly up the path, and whistled. Then I knew that Pincher was gone indeed !

I engaged the services of an unintelligible crier, and had a description of my dog bellowed round the neighbourhood. I brought the printing art into play, to portray Pincher's various attributes, and all the palings and posts within the circle of two miles burst out with an eruption of placards, of which the words "Lost" and "Dog" were, without the aid of a powerful microscope, the only legible portion. I concocted an advertisement for *The Times* newspaper. I patiently waited the result of these various schemes. They had results, I allow. I received at least twenty letters from sympathising persons, who stated that in the event of not recovering my lost favourite, they were in a position to provide another in his place. I suppose that on the evening of the day on which *The Times* issued the advertisement, at least five-and-twenty pairs of boots had printed themselves off on my dining-room drugget, which, being red in colour and fluffy in texture, is singularly capable of retaining a clear impression. The boots, in every instance, belonged to short-haired stably gentlemen in large white overcoats, from the inner pockets of which they produced specimens of dogs—ugly and morose indeed, but none of them my Pincher.

I need not say that my intimate friends came out nobly under these circumstances. Jephson, who wore check trousers of a vivid pattern which had always aroused Pincher's ire, thanked fortune that "the infernal beast was got rid of somehow." Pooley, who, labouring under a belief that all dogs were intended for swimmers, had once tried to throw Pincher into the Hampstead ponds, and had had his hand bitten to the bone for his pains, hoped that "the brute had been made into sausages." Blinkhorn, who was of a facetious turn, was sure that Pincher had been sewn

up in the skin of some deceased dog of fabulous beauty, and sold by a man in Regent Street to some old dowager. Hallmarke was the only one who gave me the least consolation. "Perhaps he's been picked up by some benevolent person," he said, "and sent to the Home. Go to the Home and see." "The Home? what Home?" I asked. "For lost dogs, at Holloway. Go and see if he's there."

On further sifting this somewhat vague information, I found that there was a place where lost and starving dogs found in the street were temporarily received and cared for; and that this place was open to the visits of the public. I determined to repair thither at once. It is a good thing for the dogs that they are sent to the Home, for assuredly they would never find their own intricate way there. On being landed from the Favourite omnibus, I made several inquiries, and at last found myself in Hollingsworth Street: a pleasant locality, which would have been pleasanter had there been less mud and more pavement.

I looked around, but saw no sign of dogginess. At last I succeeded in fixing a red-faced matron who was cuffing her offspring, and of her I inquired, as civilly as might be, if she knew where the Dogs' Home was situated? Following this lady's directions, I crossed the road, and soon found myself at the gates, when a sharp little lad, so soon as he heard my business, ushered me into the Home.

A big yard, at the opposite end of which I see a block of kennels, with a wirework fenced show-place outside, very like that appropriated to the monkeys at the Zoological Gardens. In this a crowd of dogs, who no sooner see the boy accompanying me than they set up a tremendous howling. Not a painful yelping, nothing suggestive of hunger or physical suffering; but simply that under-toned howl which means, "Take me out and give me a run." Dogs of all common kinds here, but nothing very valuable. "Mongrel, puppy, and whelp, and curs of low degree." Big dogs, half-

mastiff, half-sheepdog, bastard Scotch and English terriers, in all instances with a cross of wrong blood in them ; one or two that ought to have been beagles, but seemed to have gone to the bad ; several lurchers looking as if they ought to have had a poacher's heels to follow, and a grand gathering of the genuine English cur : that cheery, dissipated, dishonest scoundrel, who betrays his villany in the shiftiness of his eye, and the limpness of his tail : who is so often lame, and so perpetually taking furtive snatches of sleep in doorways : a citizen of the world, and yet a single-hearted brute, who will follow anyone for miles on the strength of a kind word, and who, when kicked off, turns round philosophically and awaits some better fortune.

Comfortably housed are all these dogs, with plenty to eat and drink, and a large open space where they are periodically turned out for exercise. I asked whether the neighbours did not raise strong objections to the proximity of the Home ? I was told that at first all kinds of legal persecutions were threatened, but that as time passed, the ill feeling died away, and now no complaints were made. The dogs, who are invariably rescued from starvation, are so worn out on first reaching their new abode, that they invariably sleep for many hours as soon as they have taken food, and, on recovering, seem already accustomed to their quarters, and consequently indisposed to whine. All the dogs of any standing look plump and well fed ; but there are two or three new-comers with lacklustre eyes and very painful anatomical developments. I carefully scrutinised them all. There were about eighty. Alas, Pincher was not among them. He might come in, the boy said ; there was many pleacemen bringin' in what they'd found in the night ; my dog might come in yet ; hadn't I better see the lady and talk to her ? I found "the lady" was the originator of the Home, living closely adjacent ; and from her I obtained all the particulars of her amiable hobby.

The Home for lost and starving dogs has now been in existence more than three years. The establishment was started by the present honorary secretary : a lady who had for some time been in the habit of collecting such starving animals as she found in her own neighbourhood, and paying a person a weekly sum for their keep. After explaining her plan in the columns of one of the daily newspapers, she received warm assistance, and the co-operation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals having been obtained, the Home entered upon its present extended sphere of usefulness, and boasts a large number of annual subscribers. Its object will be gathered from the following

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

1. Any dog found and brought to the Home, if applied for by the owner, will be given up to its master upon payment of the expenses of its keep.
2. Any dogs lost by Subscribers and brought to the Home will be given up free of all expense.
3. Any dog brought to the Home, not identified and claimed within fourteen days from the time of its admission, will, by order of the Committee, be sold to pay expenses, or be otherwise disposed of.
4. To prevent dog-stealing, no reward will be given to persons bringing dogs to the Home. The Committee would hope that, to persons of ordinary humanity, the consciousness of having performed a merciful action would be sufficient recompense.
5. Accommodation is now made for the reception of dogs belonging to Ladies or Gentlemen who may wish to have care taken of them during their absence from home.

Ladies and Gentlemen finding lost or starving dogs in the street, at a distance from their own residences, are recommended to arrange with some poor person, for a specified remuneration, to convey them either to the "Home" itself, or to a receiving-house. The money should on no account be given to the bearer of the dog beforehand, or only on production of a certificate in this form :

TEMPORARY HOME FOR LOST AND STARVING DOGS.

The Bearer has brought

dog to the Home.

Date

_____, Keeper.

It is scarcely necessary to say that when the scheme was first mooted it shared the fate of many other good schemes, and received violent opposition. People who would have left the wounded traveller and passed by on the other side, declaimed loudly against showing humanity to dogs, while human creatures were starving ; and some humorists pleasantly asked whether there was to be a home for lost and starving elephants. The Home has survived even these sarcasms, and unpretendingly does good ; it is not very important in its benevolence, but as no sparrow falls to the ground without an all-wise supervision, it may be granted that the charity which provides food and shelter for a starving dog is worthy of approbation. The place does good in its sphere. To do some good in any sphere is much better than to do none.

Pincher returned : not from the Home for Lost Dogs, he knew better than so far to jeopardise his social standing. He returned with a ruffled coat, a torn ear, a fierceness of eye which bespoke recent trouble. I afterwards learned that he had been a principal in a combat held in the adjoining parish, where he acquitted himself with a certain amount of honour, and was pinning his adversary, when a rustic person from a farm broke in upon the ring and kicked both the combatants out of it. This ignominy was more than Pincher could bear ; he flung himself upon the rustic's leg, and brought him to the ground : then fled, and remained hidden in a wood until hunger compelled him to come home. We have interchanged no communication since, but regard each other with sulky dignity. I perceive that he intends to remain obdurate until I make the first advances.

CHAPTER XXIV

BOYS.

“I ONLY know two sorts of boys—mealy boys and beef-faced boys !” said Mr. Grimwig when Mr. Brownlow was vaunting the excellence of young Oliver Twist. But then it must be recollect ed that Mr. Grimwig was an old bachelor, and hated children. Two sorts of boys ! I know twenty—two hundred sorts ! First of all there is your “regular boy,” who goes to a public school and is now at home for the holidays. He is about twelve years old, stout and firmly-built, ruddy-faced and curly-haired ; he wears trousers of what is known as “Oxford mixture,” a species of stuff apparently specially manufactured for the use of boys, as it is never shown to you by your tailor when you attain to manhood. These trousers are short in the legs and white at the knees ; they are smeared in the region of the pockets with reminiscences of bygone toffee ; they bulge out with concealed peg-tops, tennis-balls, and half-munched apples, and on the hips the pocket-flaps make two large “dog’s-ears.” The waistcoat was originally black, but is now of a grayish hue, from the immense quantity of powdered slate-pencil that has been spilt over it, and a stick of this valuable commodity is always protruding from the pocket, either through the legitimate opening, or through a hole made by its own sharp point. Across the waistcoat, too, runs a straight white line,

the result of perpetual rubbings against the desk while undergoing the necessary initiation into the mystery of pot-hooks and hangers. The contents of the waistcoat pockets are most probably half a peg-top, known in scholastic language as "bacon," the aforenamed slate-pencil, a favourite "alley" and a couple of "taws," a penny, half a stick of particoloured nastiness known as "Boney's ribs," and popularly supposed to be a portion of the anatomy of the late prisoner of St. Helena, and a small piece of wood sharpened at both ends and called a "cat." The first idea suggested by the jacket is that of universal shininess—the collar, the cuffs, the front-flaps by the buttons, are greased and polished to a pitch of intensity; under the left arm is a large excrescence caused by the handkerchief of the owner, a small brass cannon, a long piece of whipcord with a button at the end, and a Jew's-harp; all which are stuffed into the jacket, together with the boy's greatest treasure, a fat buck-handled knife, which, besides the large and small blades, contains a corkscrew, a saw, and an instrument for picking obtrusive stones out of horses' feet—all most useful articles to a young gentleman pursuing his education at a classical school. The socks of the regular boy, at least as much as can be seen of them between the trouser and the boot, are generally dirty; the boot is of the Blucher pattern, laceless, but with the flaps cleverly connected by means of a portion of the peg-top's whipcord. I am sorry to say that your regular boy is not good at hands—these members being generally black and grimy, with dubby, bitten nails, and tasteful decorations of cuts and warts; neither are his ears or neck worthy of close observation. His language is peculiarly his own—he never has heard it until he goes to school, he never hears it (but from his own children perhaps) after he is grown up. Do you recollect, reader, any of that wonderful tongue, and the impressions and ideas connected with it? Do you recollect the different sorts of marbles

called “alleys, taws, and clayeys ;” the mysteries of that pastime with the wonderful name “High-cock-a-lorum, jig, jig, jig ;” the stinging cuts of the tennis-ball inflicted at “egg-hat ;” the extraordinary game of “duck,” which hadn’t the slightest connection with any feathered fowl, but was played with large flint-stones ; the peculiarities of “tit, tat, to ;” the desperate struggles to obtain a straight line of “oughts and crosses”? Do you recollect what you used to eat in those days? Toffee, hardbake, allsorts, small rum and gin bottles, sugar pipes and cigars, sugar mutton-chops and various other joints elegantly painted and gilt, Bath buns by the dozen, acidulated drops by the ounce, cocoa-nuts, medlars, unripe fruit of all kinds, and a delicious preparation of frizzled quill-pen which was known as “roast beef !” As these recollections rise up before me, I no longer wonder at the fortunes achieved by Professor Holloway, Dr. De Jongh, and the venerable Jacob Townsend. Bad, however, as they may be, they do no harm to the regular boy, who has the digestion of an ostrich and the constitution of a horse, and whose severest ailments are cured by a little salts and senna. The regular boy loves all outdoor sports, dotes on the pantomime, and looks forward to the day when he shall attain maturity in order that he may be a clown. He loves his father and mother, and especially his sisters ; his brothers he both likes and licks ; grand’pa is “a jolly old brick,” and grand’m a “old trump ;” but he doesn’t get on well with his maiden aunts, and their portraits, adorned with impossible noses, wild heads of hair, and fierce moustaches, are to be found on the backs of slates and on the palings of the neighbourhood generally. Of his schoolmaster he always retains a disagreeable impression, and the schoolmaster does his best to keep it up, never believing that any of his pupils are anything but boys, even though they have great strapping children of their own standing by their side. His mechanical genius is

seldom very great—his powers of destructiveness being generally in the ascendant, and with the afore-named knife he inscribes his name in letters varying from an inch to a foot on all practicable places. He is not a great reader—the *Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Peter Parley*, constituting his library. His weakness is smoking. From the first time that he has enjoyed a penny *Pickwick* and a dreadful bilious attack simultaneously, he considers himself a man, and he runs the risk of imposition, cane, and birch, to spend half an hour on a windy afternoon behind a dreary old haystack, inhaling a nasty preparation of treacle and cabbage-leaves. Finally, the regular boy is universally knowing, but ever thirsting for information of a peculiar kind, generous, brave, predatory, averse to classic learning, idle, strong, and healthy. In these last particulars, and indeed in all others, he differs essentially from the boy who is brought up at home, or at a private tutor's, and who, in fact, is never a “boy,” but always a “young gentleman.” He is always ailing ; in the winter he wears clogs and a comforter—sometimes, indeed, a boa, to the intense delight of the ruder youths, who assault him in the streets, and call after him by the opprobrious epithet of “Miss.” He is a puny, wizen-faced, melancholy youth, but intensely gentlemanly withal. He wears gloves and Wellington boots, and mittens in winter, and takes lozenges, not as other boys do, as sweetmeats and condiments, but to do good to his chest. He never plays at any rough games ; he never soils his fingers or his linen ; he never shouts, or screams, or fights. He gets cuffed, and kicked, and chaffed by all public school-boys, and retaliates not. He is good at draughts, understands the mysteries of backgammon, and when you are dining with his family, delights them by the clever way in which he puzzles you by astute arithmetical questions culled from the *Key to Walkingham's Tutor's Assistant*. He is the boy who, in younger days, repeats “My name is

Norval," standing on a chair ; and who, when he arrives at man's estate, is pronounced to be an "agreeable rattle," and so clever in acting charades and private theatricals. He is partial to *Evenings at Home*, but abjures *Robinson Crusoe* as "a book that could not possibly be founded on fact." He is the admiration of his sisters, who think him so gentlemanly and amusing, who superintend the curling of his hair, and who work him fragile braces and useless slippers. He is generally the son of a rich man, and accordingly is made much of by his private tutor, who excuses his late arrival at the scholastic parlour, who asks tenderly after his father's health, and looks to him as only struggling tutors can. In after life he is to society what Martin Tupper and Coventry Patmore are to literature—he is a chip in the porridge of the world, harmless, inoffensive, self-satisfied, and utterly useless.

The Street Boy—the Ishmael of modern times, his hand being against every man, and every man's hand being against, and whenever there is an opportunity upon, him. He is a bully and a tyrant, and the terror of London generally ; the terror of old ladies, whom he hates with an instinctive hatred, to whose pursuit he calls forth tribes of his own class, to whom he discloses the advent of the apocryphal "mad bull," whose legs he pinches, uttering at the same time the simulated yelpings of the maddened dog. He is hated by foreign gentlemen of fantastic appearance, ridiculing them in the public streets, calling attention to the length of their beards, or the curious cut of their hats and garments, and addressing them with the mystic words "Shallabala" and "Mossoo," which he believes to be the staple idiom of their language. He is hated by omnibus conductors, whose attention he calls by loud cries of "Hi !" and to whom, on their looking round, he addresses the friendly "sight;" by gaping, mooning old gentlemen, to whom he points out imaginary balloons ; by watchmakers

and corkcutters, who practise their occupation in the windows of their shops, and who are driven mad by the rapid pantomime with which he imitates their movements, and by his repeated endeavours to startle them so that their fingers may suffer from their inattention. He is hated by poulters, before whose shops he appears unceasingly, handling hares and rabbits, and crying “Mie-aw” and “Poor puss ;” by policemen for his unremitting inquiries after the health of their inspectors, and his ardent pursuit of knowledge in the matter of the theft of the rabbit-pie ; by the lame and the blind, and by all mendicants : but he is respected by the proprietors of *Punch*, by ballad-singers, and by the itinerant vendors of articles, to all of whom he is an early and a constant audience ; and without his lending himself to be operated upon, how could the man who removes the stains from our clothes hope to prosper ?

Music may be said to have charms to soothe the savage street-boy, or rather to render him tolerably quiet for the space of a few minutes, and he will listen with complaisance even to the most cholera-producing organ. The Ethiopians are his great delight ; he likes their shirts and collars, and the patterns of their trousers, and he more especially delights in the leader of the band, with the tow wig and the leaden spectacles. He himself is generally musical, and accompanies his songs with obligatos on two bits of slate, or a Jew’s-harp, or, worse than all, an old Lowther Arcade accordion. Where he picks up the tunes that he sings is a wonder—he knows them and whistles them long before they are upon the organs ; and it is from his *répertoire* that the burlesque writer selects those airs which he knows will be most popular and most appreciated parodies. His Terpsichorean exercises are generally confined to the wondrous “double-shuffle,” and to scraps of wild and weird-like dances performed round the objects of his attack. He is generally engaged in some profession—perhaps in the green-

grocery line, when he encases his head in the empty basket as he returns from his errands, wearing the handle as a chin-strap, and decking his person with an old sack ; or he may be a butcher, in which case he furtively adorns his hair with suet, and wears long and pointed curls, known among the female servants in his neighbourhood as “ Bill’s aggerawaters.” Or he may be a printer, black-faced and paper-capped, sitting at dead of night in the outer chamber of the grinding newspaper-writer, and never thoroughly awake. He may be a fishmonger, with a garment of flannel which is contrived to pay a double debt, serving him at once for apron and pocket-handkerchief ; or a poultorer, or a grocer ; but whatever his occupation, he holds firm to one grand purpose, and never allows his pleasure to be at all interfered with by his business. Walking leisurely along with his oil-skin-covered basket, filled with medicines, on the immediate receipt of which depends perhaps life and death, he will stop and enjoy the humours of Punch, or run half a mile in the opposite direction after a fire-engine, or be beguiled by a cry of “ Stop thief !” Of course, on his return home, he will tell a lie to screen himself, and be summarily kicked and cuffed : indeed, looking at the wonderful life led by the street-boy—his exposure to cold, hunger, and misery ; his want of education and lack of kind treatment—we must not wonder at his growing into the lounging, ill-conditioned, ignorant, hardened cub, which, in nine out of ten cases, he becomes.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN AND ON AN OMNIBUS.

I SUPPOSE—the lamentable failure of his tercentenary notwithstanding—it will be considered creditable to have shared a few thoughts with the late Shakespeare. On more than one occasion I have detected myself uttering sentiments which were identical with some enunciated by that bard, differing merely in the language in which they were expressed, as might be expected when it is considered that the late Shakespeare was a pœtical party; while I pride myself on being an eminently practical man. Besides, if I may so say, my illustrations have been brought down to the present time, and are impregnated with the terse wit and playful symbolical humour of the day; whereas our friend S.'s are, to say the truth, somewhat rococo and old-fashioned. You will see what I mean when I quote one of my last, a saying which was hailed with immense delight at our club, *The Odd Tricks*, on Saturday: “All the world's an omnibus!” I am aware that S. has the same idea with regard to “a stage,” but stages do not run now, whatever they might in S.'s time, and besides, an omnibus gives greater variety.

I have been an omnibus rider all my life. To be sure I went to school in a hackney-coach, falling on my knees in the straw at the bottom, I remember, as the wretched horses stumbled up Highgate Hill, and imploring a maiden aunt,

who was my conductor, to take me back, even at the sacrifice of two bright half-crowns, which I had received as a parting tip, and a new pair of Wellington boots. But when I "left," I came away in an omnibus, and at once began my omnibus experiences. I lived then with my mother, at Beaver Cottage, Hammersmith New Road, and I used to go up every morning to the Rivet and Trivet Office, Somerset House, in the nine-o'clock omnibus, every seat of which was regularly bespoke, while the conductor summoned his passengers by wild blasts upon a horn, as the vehicle approached their doors. That was two-and-twenty years ago. Every rider in the nine-o'clock omnibus, save the junior clerk in the Rivet and Trivet department, has taken his final ride in a vehicle of much the same shape, but of a more sombre colour, and carrying only one inside ; and I, that identical junior, some years retired from the service on a little pension and a little something of my own, trying to kill time as best I may, find no pursuit more amusing than riding about in the different omnibuses, and speculating on the people I meet therein.

I am bound to say that in many respects the omnibuses and their men are greatly improved during my experience. The thirteenth seat, that awful position with your back to the horses and your face to the door, where, in a Mahomet's-coffin-like attitude, you rested on nothing, and had to contemplate your own legs calmly floating before you, very little below the faces of your right and left hand neighbours, has been abolished ; a piece of cocoa-nut matting is generally substituted for that dank straw which smelt so horribly and clung to your boots with such vicious perseverance ; most of the windows are, what is termed in stage-language, practicable, and can be moved at pleasure ; and a system of ventilation in the roof is now the rule, instead of, as in my early days, the singular exception. Thirdly, by the salutary rule of the General Omnibus Company, aided by the sharp

notice which the magistrates take of any impropriety, the omnibus servants, the coachmen and conductors, from insolent blackguards have become, for the most part, civil and intelligent men; while the whole “service”—horses harness, food, etc.—has been placed on a greatly improved footing. But my experience teaches me that the omnibus-riders are very much of the same type as ever. I still find the pleasant placid little elderly gentleman who sits on the right hand by the door, who always has an umbrella with a carved ivory top, and always wears a plaited shirt-frill, dull-gray trousers, rather short, and showing a bit of the leg of his Wellington boots; who carries a brown snuff-box like a bit of mottled soap; who hands everybody into the omnibus, and who is particular in pushing down and sending quickly after their wearers the exuberant crinolines of the ladies. It is he who always starts subscriptions among the regulars for the Lancashire distress or the frozen-out operatives, or for the widow of some stable-helper who was killed by a kicking horse, or for the crippled crossing-sweeper who was knocked down by the hansom cab. It was he who, when Stunning Joe, our “express” nine A.M. coachman, was pitched off his box going sharp round the corner of Pine-apple Place, and upset us all—we were not hurt, but Joe smashed his collar-bone and his right arm, and was not expected to live—it was our pleasant-faced little friend who used to go every day to the hospital, made interest, and got himself admitted, and took Joe a thousand little comforts, and sat by his bedside and read to him by the hour together—not forgetting, when Joe grew convalescent, to put three sovereigns into his hand, and tell him to go and set himself thoroughly right by a fortnight’s stay at the sea-side. The omnibus calls for him regularly, but long before it arrives he has walked down to the end of the crescent where he lives, with two or three of his grandchildren, who all insist on being kissed before they allow

him to start, while their mother, his daughter, seldom omits to wave her farewell from the dining-room window. He takes six weeks' holiday in the autumn, when it is understood that he is away at the sea-side with his family ; but at no other time does he omit riding to and from town in the omnibus, save on Christmas-eve, when, in consideration of certain trifling purchases he has made—among them a huge Leadenhall Market turkey, a large slice out of Fortnum and Mason's shop, and half the Lowther Arcade store of toys—he charters a cab, and freights it for the return journey with the precious produce.

I still find the old gentleman who sits on the left side of the door, and whose hands are always clasped on the top of his stick ; the old gentleman with a face like a withered apple, with the high, stiff starched cross-barred check neckerchief, the close-napped curly-brimmed hat, the beaver gloves, the pepper-and-salt trousers, the drab gaiters and boots. He never helps anybody in or out, and scowls if he be accidentally touched ; when the women's crinolines scrape his legs as their wearers pass him, he growls “Yar !” and prods at them with his stick ; he knows the sensitive part of the conductor's anatomy, and pokes him viciously therein when people want the omnibus to be stopped ; he raps the fingers of the little boys who spring on the step proffering newspapers ; he checks the time of the journey by a large white-faced gold watch, which he compares with every church-clock on the road ; he tells women to get their money ready ; he shakes his stick in a very terrifying and Gog-and-Magogish manner at crying children. He never will have the window open on the hottest summer day ; and he refuses to alight, if there be any mud, unless he is deposited close by the kerbstone, no matter if the City crush is at its height, and the omnibus has to be steered through an opposing procession of Pickfords. He is the great delight of the knifeboard “regulars,” who never omit

to send a puff of tobacco-smoke (which he detests) into his face as they mount to their elevated berths ; who call him “The Dry Fish ;” who declare that, instead of washing, he rasps himself, as a baker does rolls ; who vow, when the omnibus goes over any rough bit of road, that they hear his heart rattling inside him like a pebble ; who send him by the conductor the most tremendous messages, which that functionary enormously enjoys, but never delivers.

The Feebles, who are the constant supporters of omnibuses, still remain in all their forcible feebleness. They are of both sexes, the female perhaps predominating. They never know whether the omnibus is outward or homeward bound, and, having got in at Charing Cross, begin, when we arrive at Turnham Green, to express their wonder “when we shall come to the Bank.” They never can recollect the name of the street at which they are to be set down. “Deary me, Newland Street—no, not Newland, some name just like Newland—Archer Street, I think, or terrace ; don’t you know it ? Mrs. Blethers lives at Number Seven !” If by chance they do know the name of their destination, they mention it to the conductor when they get in, and then for the whole remainder of the seven-mile journey, whenever the vehicle stops, they bounce up from their seats, mutter “Is *this* Belinda Grove !” stagger over the feet of their fellow-passengers until they reach the door, where they are wildly repulsed, and fall back until they are jolted by the motion of the omnibus into a seat. The women carry their money either in damp smeary colourless kid gloves, round the palms of which they rake with their forefinger for a six-pence, as a snuff-connoisseur will round his box for the last few grains of Prince’s Mixture ; or they carry it in a mysterious appendage called a pocket : not a portion of the dress, but, so far as I can make out from cursory observation, a kind of linen wallet suspended from the waist, to reach which causes a great deal of muscular exertion, and

not a small display of under-garment. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Feebles never know the fare, that they always want change for a sovereign—fourpence to be deducted—that they constantly think the omnibus is going to be upset, or that the horses have run away; that they always interrupt testy old gentlemen deep in their newspapers by asking them whether there is any news; and that they are in omnibuses, as they are in life, far more obstructive and disagreeable than the most wrong-headed and bumptious.

When a child in an omnibus is good, you hate it; what can you do when it is bad! When it is good, it kneels on the seat with its face to the window, and with its muddy boots, now on the lap of its next, now against the knees of its opposite, neighbour. It drums upon the glass with its fist, it rubs the glass with its nose. When it is bad, if it be very young, from under its ribboned cap, fiercely cocked on one side, it glares at you with a baleful eye, and dribbles as in mockery, with one mottled arm up to the elbow in its mouth. If it be “getting on” and older, it commences to swing its legs like two clock pendulums, with a regular motion, increasing in vigour until one of its feet catches you on the shin, when it is “fetched-up” short by a sharp prod in the side from its attendant sprite, and is put as a punishment to “stand down.” Then it deposits itself on your toes, and thence commences the ascent of your leg, taking your instep as its Grands Mulets, or resting-place.

Among the general characteristics of “insides,” I need scarcely point out a feeling inducing those already in possession to regard every new-comer with loathing, to decline tendering the least assistance, to close up their ranks as earnestly as the Scottish spearmen did at Flodden Field, “each stepping where his comrade stood,” and to leave the new arrival to grope his way through a thick brushwood of knees, crinolines, and umbrellas, to the end of the omnibus,

where he finally inserts as much of himself as he can between the woodwork and his next neighbour's shoulder, and leaves his ultimate position to Time the Avenger. It is also an infallible and rigorously observed rule that, if two people meeting in an omnibus know each other and speak, all the other people in the omnibus endeavour to listen to what those two are saying--also, that all the other people pretend that they are not listening or paying the least attention to the conversation. Further, it is necessary that whenever a stout person is seen blocking out the daylight in the doorway, each side having the same complement of passengers, all should begin to assume a defiant air, and get close together and play that game known among children as "no child of mine," or to treat the new-comer as a kind of shuttlecock, tossing him from one to the other until an accidental jolt decides his fate.

The "outsides" are a very different class. Women are never seen there, save when an occasional maid-servant going into the country for a holiday climbs up beside the coachman : who, though he greatly enjoys her company, becomes the object of so much ribald chaff among his associates. Passing him on the road, they inquire "when it's a comin' off?" if he be unmarried ; or if he be in a state of connubial bliss, threaten to "tell the missis." But the "outsides" are, for the most part, young men of fast tendencies, who always make a point of ascending and descending while the omnibus is at its swiftest, and who would be degraded and disgusted if the driver slackened his pace to accommodate them. Some of them are very young-looking indeed, and but one remove from schoolboys ; and these, I notice, feel bound to suck wooden or meerschaum pipes, and to talk of their exploits of the previous evening. With them, the conductor, always known by his christian-name, is on the pleasantest terms, occasionally being admitted to the friendly game of pool, at the tavern where the journey

terminates. They know all the other omnibus servants on the road, who touch their hats as they pass, and they maintain a constant conversation about them in a low growling tone : as—“ Old Harry’s late again this morning ! ” “ Little Bill’s still driving that blind ’un, I see ! ” and so forth.

Most of these young fellows have their regular booked seats, for which they pay weekly, whether they occupy them or no ; and for a stranger to get up amongst them is as bad as if he were accidentally to penetrate into the sacred precincts of the Stock Exchange.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DIRTY DERBY.

WHEN I think that this is written with unshackled hands in a pleasant library instead of a padded cell, that I am as much in possession of my senses as I ever was, and that I acted under no constraint or obligation—I feel that the world will be naturally incredulous when I record the fact that I went to the last Derby. I blush as I make the statement; but if I had not gone, what could I have done with O'Hone, who had come over from Ballyblether expressly for the event, who had been my very pleasant guest for the three previous days, and who would have been grievously disappointed had he not put in an appearance on the Downs? For O'Hone is decidedly horsey. From the crown of his bell-shaped hat to the soles of his natty boots, taking in his cutaway coat, his long waistcoat, and his tight trousers, there is about him that singular flavour, compounded of stables, starting-bells, posts and rails, trodden grass, metallic memorandum-books, and lobster-salad, which always clings to those gentry whom the press organs are pleased to describe as “patrons of the turf.” Since O'Hone has been with me, the stout cob whose services I retain for sanitary purposes, and who is wont to jolt me up the breezy heights of Hampstead or through the green lanes of Willesden, has been devoted to my friend, has undergone

an entirely new phase of existence, has learnt to curvet and dance, and has passed a considerable portion of each day in airing himself and his rider in the fashionable Row. For I find it characteristic of all my visitors from the country, that while they are in town not merely should they see, but also that they should be seen ; there is generally some friend from their country town staying in London at the same time, to whom they like to exhibit themselves to the best advantage, and there is always the local member of parliament, who is called upon and catechised, and whose life, from what I can make out, must be a weary one indeed.

For O'Hone to miss seeing the race would have been wretched, though even then he would not have been worse off than an American gentleman who crossed the Atlantic expressly to attend the Epsom festival, and who, being seized with the pangs of hunger at about half-past two on the Derby day, entered Mr. Careless's booth and began amusing himself with some edible "fixings" in the way of lunch, in which pleasant task he was still engaged when shouts rent the air, and the American gentleman rushing hatless out of the booth, and finding that the race had been run and was over, burst into the piercing lamentation : "Oh Jé--rusalem ! To come three thousand miles to eat cold lamb and salad !" But O'Hone to miss being seen at the race, being recognised by the member, by Tom Durfy, now sporting reporter on the press, but erst educated at the Ballyblether Free School, and by two or three townsmen who were safe to be on the Downs—that would be misery indeed. Moreover, I was dimly conscious of a white hat, and a singular alpaca garment (which gave one the idea that the wearer's tailor had sent home the lining instead of the coat), which I knew had been specially reserved by my friend for the Derby day. So I determined that, so far as I was concerned, no overt objection to our going to Epsom should be made.

I still, however, retained a latent hope that the sense of impending misery, only too obvious from the aspect of the sky during the two previous days, would have had its natural effect in toning down my impulsive guest; but when I went into his bedroom on the morning of the fatal day, and when I pulled up the blind and made him conscious of the rain pattering against his window, he merely remarked that "a light animal was no good to-day, anyhow," and I, with a dim internal consciousness that I, albeit a heavy animal, was equally of no good under the circumstances, withdrew in confusion. At breakfast, O'Hone was still appallingly cheerful, referred in a hilarious manner to the "laying of the dust," borrowed my waterproof coat with a gentlemanly assumption which I have only seen rivalled by the light comedian in a rattling farce, and beguiled me into starting, during a temporary cessation of the downfall, after he had made a severe scrutiny of the sky, and had delivered himself of various meteorological observations, in which, when they come from persons residing in the country, I have a wild habit of implicitly believing.

We had promised, the night before, to call for little Iklass, an artist, and one of the pleasantest companions possible when all went well, but who, if it rained, or the cork had come out of the salad-dressing, or the salt had been forgotten at a picnic, emerged as Apollyon incarnate. Little Iklass's greatest characteristic being his generous devotion to himself, I knew that the aspect of the morning would prevent him from running the chance of allowing any damp to descend on that sacred form. We found him smoking a pipe, working at his easel, and chuckling at the discomfiture outside. "No, no, boys," said he, "not I! I'll be hanged——"

"Which you weren't this year at the Academy!" I interrupted viciously. But you *can't* upset Iklass with your finest sarcasm!

"The same to you, and several of them—no—which I was not—but I *will* be if I go to-day! It'll be awfully miserable, and there are three of us, and I daresay you won't always let me sit in the middle, with you to keep the wind off on either side. And I won't go!" And he wouldn't; so we left him, and saw him grinning out of his window, and pointing with his mahl-stick at the skies, whence the rain began to descend again as we got into the cab.

We went on gloomily enough to the Waterloo Station; we passed the Regent Circus, and saw some very shy omnibuses with paper placards of "Epsom" on them, empty and ghastly; there was no noise, no excitement, no attempt at joyousness! I remembered the Derbys of bygone years, and looked dolefully at O'Hone; but he had just bought a "crect card," and was deep in statistical calculations.

There was no excitement at the station; we took our places at the tail of a damp little crowd, and took our tickets as though we were going to Birmingham. There *was* a little excitement on getting into the train of newly-varnished carriages destined for our conveyance, for the damp little crowd had been waiting some time, and made a feeble little charge as the train came up. O'Hone and I seized the handle of a passing door, wrenched it open and jumped in. We were followed by an old gentleman with a long stock and a short temper, an affable stock-broker in a perspiration, and two tremendous swells, in one of whom I recognised the Earl of Wallsend, the noble colliery proprietor. Our carriage is thus legitimately full; but a ponderous woman of masculine appearance and prehensile wrists hoists herself on to the step, and tumbles in amongst us. This rouses one of the swells, who remonstrates gently, and urges that there is no room; but the ponderous woman is firm, and not only takes 'vantage-ground herself, but invites a male friend, called John, to join her. "Coom in,

Jan ! Coom in, tell ye ! Coom in, Jan ! ” But here the swell is adamant. “ No,” says he, rigidly, “ I’ll be deed if John shall come in ! Police ! ” And when the guard arrives, first John is removed, and then the lady ; and then the swell says, with an air of relief : “ Good Heaven ! did they think the carriage was a den of wild beasts ? ”

So, through a quiet stealing rain, the train proceeded, and landed us at last at a little damp rickety station—an oasis of boards in a desert of mud. Sliding down a greasy clay hill, we emerged upon the town of Epsom and the confluence of passengers by rail and by road. We, who had come by the rail, were not lively ; we were dull and dreary, but up to this point tolerably dry, in which we had the advantage of those who had travelled by the road, and who were not merely sulky and morose, but wet to their skins. At The Spread Eagle and at The King’s Head stood the splashed drags with the steaming horses, while their limp occupants tumbled dismally off the roofs, and sought temporary consolation in hot brandy-and-water. A dog-cart, with two horses driven tandem-fashion, and conveying four little gents, attempted to create an excitement on its entry into the town. One of the little gents on the back seat took a post-horn from its long wicker case and tried to blow it, but the rain, which had gradually been collecting in the instrument, ran into his mouth and choked him ; while the leading horse, tempted by the sight of some steaming hay in a trough, turned sharp round and looked its driver piteously in the face, refusing to be comforted, or, what was more to the purpose, to move on, until it had obtained refreshment. So, on through the dull little town, where buxom women looked with astonishment mixed with pity at the passers-by ; and where, at a boot-shop, the cynical proprietor stood in the doorway smoking a long clay pipe and openly condemned us with a fiendish laugh as “ a pack of adjective jackasses ; ” up the hill, on which

the churned yellow mud lay in a foot-deep bath, like egg-
flip, and beplastered us wretched pedestrians whenever it
was stirred by horses' hoofs or carriage-wheels ; skirting
the edge of a wheat-field (and a very large edge we made of
it before we had finished), the proprietor whereof had
erected a few feeble twigs by way of barriers here and there
—a delusion and a mockery which the crowd had resented
by tearing them up and strewing them in the path ; across a
perfect Slough of Despond situated between two brick
walls, too wide to jump, too terrible to laugh at, a thing to
be deliberately waded through with turned-up trousers, and
heart and boots that sank simultaneously ; a shaking bog,
on the side of which stood fiendish boys armed with wisps
of straw, with which, for a consideration, they politely pro-
posed to clean your boots.

I didn't want my boots cleaned. I was long past any such attempt at decency. O'Hone was equally reckless ; and so, splashed to our eyes, we made our way to the course. Just as we reached the Grand Stand a rather shabby carriage dashed up to the door, and a howl of damp welcome announced that Youthful Royalty had arrived. Youthful Royalty, presently emerging in a Macintosh coat, with a cigar in its mouth, proved so attractive that any progress in its immediate vicinity was impossible ; so O'Hone and I remained tightly jammed up in a crowd, the component parts of which were lower, worse, and wickeder than I have ever seen. Prize-fighters—not the aristocracy of the ring ; not those gentry who are “to be heard of,” or whose money is ready ; not those who are always expressing in print their irrepressible desire to do battle with Konky's Novice at catch-weight, or who have an “Unknown” perpetually walking about in greatcoat, previous to smashing the champion—not these, but elderly flabby men with flattened noses and flaccid skins and the seediest of great-coats buttoned over the dirtiest of jerseys ; racing touts—

thin, wiry, sharp-faced little men, with eyes strained and bleary from constant secret watching of racers' gallops ; dirty, battered tramps, sellers of cigar-lights and c'rect cards ; pickpockets, shifty and distrustful, with no hope of a harvest from their surroundings ; and "Welshers," who are the parody on Tattersall's and the Ring, who are to the Jockey Club and the Enclosure what monkeys are to men—poor pitiful varlets in greasy caps and tattered coats, whose whole wardrobe would be sneered at in Holywell Street or Rag Fair, and who yet are perpetually bellowing, in hoarse ragged tones, "I'll bet against the field !" "I'll bet against Li-bellous !" "I'll bet against the Merry Maid !" "I'll bet against anyone, bar one !" Nobody seemed to take their bets, nobody took the slightest notice of their offers, and yet they bellowed away until the race was run, in every variety of accent—in cockney slang, in Yorkshire harshness, in Irish brogue. These were the only members of the crowd thoroughly intent on their business ; for all the rest Youthful Royalty had an immense attraction.

Sliding and slithering about on the sloping ground where turf had been and where now mud was, they pushed, and hustled, and jumped up to look over each other's heads. "*Vich* is 'im? *Vich* is 'im?" "*Not* 'im ! That's the late Duke o' Vellington ! There's the Prince a blowin' his 'bacca like a man !" "Ain't he dry neither ?" "Ain't *I*? Vonder vether he'd stand a drain?" "He wouldn't look so chuff if he vos down here, vith this moisture a tricklin' on his 'ed !" "Who's the hold bloke in barnacles ?" "That—that's Queen Hann !" No wet, no poverty, no misery, could stop the crowd's chaff ; and amidst it all still rang out the monotonous cry of the "Welshers"—"I'll bet against Li-bellous !" "I'll bet against the field !"

A dull thudding on the turf, a roar from the neighbouring stand, and the simultaneous disappearance of ~~all~~ the

“Welshers,” tells us—for we can see nothing—that the first race is over, and that we can move towards the hill. Motion is slow ; for the crowd surging on to the course is met by a crowd seething off it, and when I do fight to the front, I have to dip under a low rail, and come out on the other side, like a diver. The course was comparatively dry ; and just as we emerged upon it, a large black overhanging cloud lifted like a veil, and left a bright, unnatural, but not unpromising sky. O’Hone brightened simultaneously, and declared that all our troubles were over ; we gained the hill, worked our way through the lines of carriages, received a dozen invitations to lunch, took a glass or two of sherry as a preliminary instalment, and settled down for the Derby. The old preparations annually recurring—the bell to clear the course, the lagging people, the demonstrative police, the dog (four different specimens this year at different intervals, each with more steadfastness of purpose to run the entire length of the course than I have ever seen previously exhibited), the man who, wanting to cross, trots halfway, is seized and brought back in degradation ; the man who says or does something obnoxious (nobody ever knows what) to his immediate neighbours just before the race, and is thereupon bonneted, and kicked, and cuffed into outer darkness ; the yelling Ring ; the company on the hill, purely amateurish, with no pecuniary interest beyond shares in a five-shilling sweepstakes, and divided between excitement about the race and a desire for lunch ; the entrance of the horses from the paddock, the preliminary canter—all the old things, with one new feature—new to me at least—**THE RAIN !** No mistake about it ; down, down it came in straight steady pour ; no blinking it, no “merely a shower,” no hint at “laying the dust ;” it asserted its power at once, it defied you to laugh at it, it defied you to fight against it, it meant hopeless misery, and it carried out its meaning. Up with the hoods of open carriages, out with the rugs, up with the

aprons, unfurl umbrellas on the top of the drags ; shiver and crouch Monsieur Le Sport, arrived *via* Folkestone last night—poor Monsieur Le Sport, in the thin paletot and the curly-brimmed hat, down which the wet trickles, and the little jean boots with the shiny tips and the brown-paper soles, already pappy and sodden. Cower under your canvas wall, against which no sticks at three a penny will rattle to-day, O gipsy tramp ; run to the nearest drinking-booth, O band of niggers, piebald with the wet ! For one mortal hour do we stand on the soaked turf in the pouring rain, with that horrid occasional shiver which always accompanies wet feet, waiting for a start to be effected. Every ten minutes rises a subdued murmur of hope, followed by a growl of disappointment. At last they are really “off,” and for two minutes we forget our misery. But it comes upon us with redoubled force when the race is over, and there is nothing more to look forward to.

Lunch ? Nonsense ! Something to keep off starvation, if you like—a bit of bread and a chicken’s wing—but no attempt at sociality. One can’t be humorous inside a close carriage with the windows up, and the rain battering on the roof ! Last year it was iced champagne, claret-cup, and silk overcoats ; now it ought to be hot brandy-and-water, foot-baths, and flannels. Home ! home, across the wheat-field, now simple squash ; down the hill, now liquid filth ; through the town, now steaming like a laundress’s in full work ; home by the train with other silent, sodden, miserable wretches ; home in a cab, past waiting crowds of jeering cynics, who point the finger and take the sight, and remark, “Ain’t they got it, neither !” and “Water-rats this lot !”—home to hot slippers, dry clothes, a roaring fire, and creature-comforts, and a stern determination never again to “do” a dirty Derby.

CHAPTER XXVII.

INNOCENTS' DAY.

ON the evening of Wednesday, the 3rd of June, a contest was waged between the two guardian angels respectively typifying Pleasure and Duty, who are appointed to watch over the humble person of the present writer. These contests are by no means of unfrequent occurrence ; but as this was a specially sharp tussle, and as it ended by Duty getting the best of it—which is very seldom the case—I feel bound to record it. This humble person was, on the occasion in question, seated in his small suburban garden, on a rustic seat (than which he ventures to opine in regard to the hardness of the surface to be sat upon, its slipperiness, its normal dampness, and the tendency of its knobbly formation towards irritation of the spinal cord, there cannot be a more distressing piece of furniture), was smoking an after-dinner pipe, and was contemplating the glowing relics of the splendid day fast being swallowed up in the gray of the evening, when he felt a slight (mental) tap on his left shoulder, and became aware of the invisible presence of Pleasure.

“ Lovely evening !” said Pleasure.

“ Gorgeous !” said the present writer, who had had his dinner, and was proportionally enthusiastic.

“ Splendid for Ascot to-morrow !”

“ Mag-nificent !”

"You'll go, of course?"

Mental tap on my right shoulder, and still small voice : " You'll do nothing of the sort ! " Ha, ha ! I thought, Duty has come to the charge, then.

" Well !" I hesitated, " you see I——"

" What !" exclaimed Pleasure, " are you in any doubt ? Think of the drive down the cool calm Windsor Park, with the big umbrageous trees, the blessed stillness, the sweet fresh air ! Then the course, so free and breezy, the odour of the trodden turf, the excitement of the race, the——"

" Think of how to pay your tailor," whispered Duty ; " the triumph of a receipted bill, the comfort of knowing that you're wearing your own coat and not Schnipp and Company's property ! Stick to your great work on Logarithms ; be a man, and earn your money."

" You'll kill the man !" said Pleasure, beginning to get angry. " You know what all work and no play makes Jack."

" His name isn't Jack, and if it were, what then ? " retorted Duty. " Do you know what all play and no work makes a man, or rather what it leaves him ? A purposeless idiot, a shambling, loafing idler, gaping through his day, and wasting other people's precious time. Ah ! if some of your followers, ' votaries of pleasure,' as they're called, both male and female, had some permanent occupation for only a few hours of the day, the sin, and crime, and misery that now degrade the world might be reduced by at least one-half ! "

" Don't talk of *my* followers, if you please, old lady !" shouted Pleasure, highly indignant. " No need to say that none are ' allowed ' in your case, I should think. With your horribly stern ideas you do far more mischief than I. Ever holding you before their eyes, men slave and slave until such wretched life as is left them terminates at middle age ; seen through your glasses, life is a huge sandy desert,

watered by the tears of the wretched pilgrims, but yielding no blade of hope, no flower of freshness. I hate such cant!"

"Madam!" said Duty, with grave courtesy, "your language is low. I leave you."

"And I leave you, you old frump!" And both guardian angels floated away: Pleasure, as she passed, bending over me, and murmuring in my ear, "You'll go to Ascot!"

But when I came indoors and examined the contents of my cash-box, I found that the waters were very low indeed; when I looked on my desk and saw about fifteen written slips of paper (my great work on Logarithms) on the right-hand side, and about five hundred perfectly blank and virgin slips on the left; when I thought of the bills that were "coming on," and of the bills that had recently passed by without having been "met," I determined to stick steadily to my work, and to give up all idea of the races. In this state of mind I remained all night, and—shutting my eyes to the exquisite beauty of the day—all the early morning, and in which state of mind I still continued, when, immediately after breakfast, I was burst in upon by Oppenhart—of course waving a ticket.

It is a characteristic of Oppenhart's always to be waving tickets! A good fellow with nothing particular to do (he is in a government office), he has hit upon an excellent method of filling up his leisure by becoming a member of every imaginable brotherhood, guild, society, or chapter, for the promotion of charity and the consumption of good dinners. What proud position he holds in the grand masonic body I am unable positively to state. On being asked, he replies that he is a—something alphabetical, I'm afraid to state what, but a very confusing combination of letters—then he is an Odd Fellow, and an Old Friend, and a Loving Brother, and a Rosicrucian, and a Zoroaster, and a Druid,

and a Harmonious Owl, and an Ancient Buffalo. I made this latter discovery myself, for having been invited by a convivial friend to dine at the annual banquet of his "herd," I found there Oppenhart, radiant in apron and jewel and badge, worshipped by all around. He has drawers full of aprons, ribbons, stars, and "insignia;" he is always going to initiate a novice, or to pass a degree, or to instal an arch, or to be steward at a festival; and he is always waving tickets of admission to charitable dinners, where you do not enjoy yourself at all, and have to subscribe a guinea as soon as the cloth is drawn. So that when I saw the card in his hand I made up my mind emphatically to decline, and commenced shaking my head before he could utter a word.

"Oppenhart, once for all, I WON'T! The Druids sit far too late, and there's always a difference of opinion among the Harmonious Owls. I've got no money to spare, and I won't go."

"Well, but you've been boring me for this ticket for the last three years!" says Oppenhart. "Don't you know what to-day is? it's Innocents' Day."

I thought the Innocents were some new brotherhood to which he had attached himself, and I rebelled again; but he explained that he meant thus metaphorically to convey that that day was the anniversary meeting of the charity children in St. Paul's, a gathering at which I had often expressed a wish to be present, and for which he had procured me a ticket. "Got it from Brother Pugh, J.G.W., Bumblepuppy Lodge of Yorkshire, No. 1, who is on the committee; don't tell Barker I gave it you, or I should never know peace again."

Captain Barker is Oppenhart's shadow, dresses at him, follows him into his charities, his dinners, and his clubs, and though but a faint reflex of the great original, yet, owing to the possession of a swaggering manner and a bow-wowy

voice, so patronises his Mentor that the latter's life is a burden to him.

I promised not to tell Barker, I took the ticket, I decided to go, and I went. Even Duty could not have urged much against such a visit, the mode of transit to which was the sixpenny omnibus ! My card was admissible between ten and twelve, but it was scarcely eleven when I reached St. Paul's, and I thought I would amuse myself by watching the arriving company. Carriages were pouring into the churchyard thick and fast, a few hired flys, but principally private vehicles, sedate in colour, heavy in build, filled with smug gentlemen, smuggler ladies and demure daughters, driven by sedate coachmen, and conveying serious footmen behind, drawn by horses which had a Claphamite air, utterly different from the prancing tits of the Parks—sober easy-going animals, laying well to collar, and doing the work cut out for them in all seriousness and gravity. Preceded by beadles, gorgeous creatures in knobbly gowns and cockades like black fans in their hats (who, however, were so utterly unable to make any impression on the crowd that they had themselves to enlist the services of, and to be taken in tow by, the police), flanked by the clergymen of the parish, generally painfully modest at the gaze of the multitude, the troops of charity children came pouring in from every side ; and, round each door was gathered an admiring crowd, principally composed of women, watching the entrance of the schools. The excitement among these good people was very great. “Here's our school, mother !” cried a big bouncing girl of eighteen, evidently “in service.” “Look at Jane, ain't she nice ? Lor, she's forgot her gloves !” and then she telegraphed at a tremendous rate to somebody who didn't see her, and was loud in her wailing. Two old women were very politely confidential to each other. “Yes, mem, this is St. Saviour's School, mem, and a good school it is, mem !” “Oh, I know it well, mem ! which it was my

parish until I moved last Janiwarry, and shall always think of partin' with regret, mem ! " " Ho ! indeed, mem ! Now, to be sure ! Wos you here last year, mem ? No, you wos not ! Ah, it wos a wet day, a dreadful disappointment, mem ! though our children made the best on it, the boys wore their capes, and the gals wos sent in cabs, they wos !" Nearly everywhere the sight of the children made a pleasant impression. I saw two regular Old Bailey birds, with the twisted curl and the tight cap and the grease-stained fustians, stop to look at them, and one of them, pointing with his pipe, said in quite a soft voice to the other : " Reg'lar pretty, ain't it ? " The boys at St. Paul's School left off their play, and rushed at the grating which separates them from the passers-by and howled with delight ; the omnibus men pulled up short to let the children cross, and, possibly out of respect for such youthful ears, refrained from favouring their horses with any of their favourite appellations ; only one person sneered—a very little person in human form, who climbed with difficulty into a high hansom. He was evidently Ascot-bound, and, as he drove off, lighted a very big cigar, which stuck out of his mouth like a bowsprit. This majestic little person curled his little lip at the mildness of our amusement.

I went round, as my ticket directed me, to the north door of the cathedral, and found the entrance gaily covered in with canvas, surrounded by a crowd of gazers, and guarded by such large-whiskered and well-fed policemen as only the City can produce. Up some steps, and into the grasp of the stewards, duly decorated with blue watch-ribbons and gold medals like gilt crown-pieces. Stewards of all sorts—the bland steward, " This way, if you please. Your ticket ? thank you. To the left ; thank you ! " with a bow and a smile as though you had done him a personal favour in coming ; the irritable steward, short, stout, and wiping his stubbly head with one hand, motioning to the advancing

people with the other—"Go *back*, sir! go *back*, sir! Can't you hear? Jenkins, turn these—Jenkins, where the dev——" (cut short by nudge from bland steward, who whispers). "Ah, I forgot! I mean where can Jenkins have got to? *back*, sir! the other side of that railing, do you *hear* me? *back*, sir!"—the sniggering steward, to whose charge the ladies are usually confided; the active steward, who springs over benches and arranges chairs; the passive nothing-doing steward, who looks on, and takes all the credit (not an uncommon proceeding in the world at large); and the misanthropic steward, who has been "let in" for his stewardship, who loathes his wand and leaves it in a dark corner, who hates his medal and tries to button his coat over it, who stares grimly at everything, and who has only one hope left—"to get out of the place." Types of all these generic classes were in St. Paul's, as they are in all charitable gatherings. Most excited of all were four holding plates, two on either side the door, and as each knot of people climbed the steps, the stewards rattled the plates until the shillings and half-sovereigns sprung up and leaped about as they do under the movement-compelling horsehair of the conjurer.

Proceeding, I found myself under the grand dome of St. Paul's, in the middle of an arena with a huge semi-circular wooden amphitheatre of seats, tier above tier, on either side of me, the pulpit facing me, and at my back the vast depth of the cathedral reaching to the west entrance completely thronged with people. The amphitheatre, reserved entirely for the children, presented a very curious appearance. A painted black board, or in some instances a gay banner inscribed with the name of the school, was stuck up on high as a guide. Thus I read: Ludgate Ward, Langbourn Ward, Rains' Charity; and the children were seated in rows one under the other, ranging from the top of the wooden erection to the bottom. A thin rope, or rail, divided one school from the other. Several of the schools had already taken

their places, the boys at the back and the girls in the front, in their modest little kerchiefs, their snowy bibs and tuckers, their (in many instances) remarkably picturesque caps, and their dresses in heavy hues of various sober colours. Between two schools thus settled down would come a blank space yet unoccupied, and thus the amphitheatre looked like the window of some linendraper's shop, as I have seen it when "set out" by some unskilful hand, with rivulets of pretty ribbons meandering from one common source, but with bits of the framework on which they rested showing between.

Half-past eleven, and the seats specially reserved for holders of tickets are becoming full : elderly spinsters with poke bonnets and black mittens, pretty girls with full crinolines and large brass crosses on their red-edged prayer-books, a good many serious young men, whose appearance gives me a general notion of the committee of a literary institution, and a few languid and expensive men, who seem utterly lost, and gaze vacantly about them through rimless eye-glasses ; the clergy in great force—short stout old gentlemen with no necks to speak of, only crumpled rolls of white linen between their chins and their chests ; tall thin old gentlemen with throats like cranes, done up in stiff white stocks with palpable brass buckles showing over their coat-collars ; bland mellifluous young gentlemen in clear-starched dog-collars and M.B. waistcoats ; and a few sensible clergymen wearing their beards and not losing one whit of reverend or benign appearance thereby. I take my seat next a pompous old gentleman in shiny black, who wears a very singular pair of gloves made of a thin gray shiny silk with speckles cunningly inwoven, which make his hand look like a salmon's back, a stout old gentleman who pushes me more than I like, and then scowls at me, and then says to his daughter : "Too hot ! too close ! we'd better have stopped at Shooter's 'Ill," in which sentiment I mentally concur. Now, the last vacant

spaces between the schools are filled up, and the children are so tightly packed that one would think every square inch must have been measured beforehand and duly allotted. Each semicircle is like a sloping bed of pretty flowers. White is the prevailing colour, interspersed with lines of dark blue, light blue, slate, gray, and here and there a vivid bit of scarlet ; such coquettish little caps, puffed, and frilled, and puckered as though by the hands of the most expensive French clear-starchers ; such healthy happy little faces, with so much thoroughly English beauty of bright eye, and ruddy lip, and clear glowing complexion. Ah ! the expenditure of yellow soap that must take place on the morning of Innocents' Day ! All looked thoroughly clean and well, and, like the gentleman at his theological examination when asked to state which were the major and which were the minor prophets, I " wish to make no invidious distinctions." Yet I cannot refrain from placing on record that the girls of two of the schools had special adornments, the damsels of St. Botolph's, Aldgate, wearing a rose in their waistbands, while each of the little maidens of Aldgate Ward bore a nosegay of fresh wild flowers.

Twelve o'clock, the children all rise up, and all heads are turned towards the south door. I look round in the direction and behold a fat elderly man, in a black gown and a curled wig, like a barrister, painfully toiling under the weight of an enormous gilt mace, which he carries across his arms after the fashion of pantomime-warriors generally. My pompous neighbour stirs up his daughter with his elbow, and whispers, with great reverence, " The Lord Mayor, my dear !" This great magnate is, however, unable to be present, but sends as his representative an alderman. There are the sheriffs appropriately dressed, this broiling June day, in scarlet gowns trimmed with fur, wearing enormous chains, and looking altogether cool and comfortable. They are ushered into their seats with much

ceremony, the elderly barrister puts the mace across the top of a pew, and seats himself immediately under the pulpit, in an exhausted condition. Two clergymen appear behind a raised table covered with red cloth ; and, at a given signal, the children proceed to their prefatory prayer, all the girls covering their faces simultaneously with their little white aprons ; this has a most singular effect, and, for the space of a minute, the whole amphitheatre looks as though populated with those “veiled vestals” with whose appearance the cunning sculptor-hand of Signor Monti made us familiar.

When the children rise again, there rises simultaneously in a tall red box, like a Punch's show with the top off, an energetic figure in a surplice, armed with a long stick ; the organ begins to play, and, led by the man in the surplice, the children commence the Hundredth Psalm, which is sung in alternate verses, the children on the right taking the first verse, and the second being taken up by those on the left. I had heard much of this performance, and, like all those things of which we hear much, I was a little disappointed. I had heard of people being very much affected ; of their bursting into tears, and showing other signs of being overcome. I saw nothing of this. The voices of the children were fresh, pure, and ringing ; but where I stood at least, very close to the choir, there was a shrillness in the tone, which at times was discordant and almost painful. There was also a marked peculiarity in the strong sibilation given to the letter “s” in any words in which it occurred.

Several times during the ensuing service the children sang much in the same manner, and I began to think that all I had heard was overrated, when after a sermon, during which many of them had refreshed themselves with more than forty winks and considerably more than forty thousand nods, they burst into the glorious Hallelujah Chorus. The

result was astonishing. I cannot describe it. At each repetition of the word "Hallelujah" by the four thousand fresh voices, you felt your eyes sparkle and your cheeks glow. There was a sense of mental and physical exhilaration which I not only felt myself, but marked in all around me. Now for the first time I understood how the effect of which I had been told had been produced ; now I comprehended how the "intelligent foreigner" (who is always brought forward as a reference) had said that such a performance could not be matched in the world.

As I left the building the money-boxes were rattling again, and I, and many others, paid in our mites in gratitude for what we had seen and heard. I hope the children enjoyed themselves afterwards ; I hope they had not merely an intellectual treat. The end crowns the work, they say. In this case the work had been admirably performed, and I hope that the end which crowned it consisted of tea and buns.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAWDUST AND LAMPS.

FOR the last twenty years of my life—and I am now only forty-five—I have been an old man, a heavy old man ; burnt-cork furrows have ploughed up my cheeks ; bald scalp wigs have worn away my once curly hair ; crow's-feet of the blackest Indian-ink have encircled my eyes. In the prime of my life I lost my individuality, and became “Old Foggles”—Old Foggles I have remained. It is not of myself, however, that I am about to speak ; my human, like my theatrical career, has been one of simple “general utility.” He whose story I am going to relate was born to brighter and better things, and kicked down the ladder with his own foot when within reach of the topmost rung.

Twenty years ago I was engaged with Barker, who then managed the Flamborough Circuit, and, after playing at a few minor towns, we opened at Wealborough, the queen of the watering-places in that part of England, and Barker's surest card. An idle, pleasure-seeking, do-nothing kind of place was, and is, Wealborough. There are rows of grand stuccoed houses facing the sea, libraries, promenades, bands, old ruins, the very pitches for picnics, within an easy distance, horses for the swells to ride, officers for the ladies to flirt with, baths for the valetudinarians to endeavour to regain their used-up health in, and the prettiest pro-

vincial theatre in the world for evening resort. Theatricals then were at no low ebb ; for there was the race week, and the assize week, the Mayor's bespeak, and the officers' bespeak ; and when things flagged Barker would send round to the different boarding-houses and hotels, and get the visitors to order what pieces they liked, pitting their tastes one against the other, as it were ; so that business was brisk, actors were happy, and there were no unpaid salaries—for, as they say in the profession, “the ghost walked” every Saturday morning. At the time I am speaking of, however, and for the first season for many years, matters were not so bright as we could have wished. The combination of circumstances was against us. An evangelical clergyman, a tall man, with long black hair and wild eyes, was attracting everybody's attention, and was weekly in the habit of inveighing against theatrical entertainments, and denouncing all those who attended them ; while Duffer, the low comedian, who had been engaged at a large expense, in consequence of the enormous hit he had made in the manufacturing districts, proved too strong for the refined taste of the Wealborough visitors, and by his full-flavoured speeches, eked out by appropriate gesture, frightened half the box audience from the theatre. We were playing to houses but a third full, and were getting utterly miserable and dispirited, when one day old Barker, whose face had for some time resembled a fiddle, his chin reaching to his knees, called us together on the stage, after rehearsal, and joyfully announced that he thought he had at last found a means for restoring our fallen fortunes. He told us that a young man, utterly unknown, had offered himself as the representative of those characters which among the public are known as the *jeunes premiers*, but which we call “first juvenile tragedy ;” that he had tried him privately, engaged him at once, and that, if he did not make a tremendous hit next Monday, the occasion of the officers' bespeak,

in *Hamlet*, he, Barker, did not know what was what in theatrical matters. The next day came, and the neophyte, who was introduced under the name of Dacre, attended rehearsal ; he was tall, handsome, and evidently a perfect gentleman ; he went through the part quietly and sensibly enough, but made no new points and gave no exaggerated readings ; so that Duffer, the low comedian, by nature a morose and miserable man, and made more surly by his recent failure at Wealborough, shrugged his shoulders, and prophesied the speedy closing of the theatre. I myself held a different opinion ; I thought the young man spoke with ease and judgment ; that he was reserving himself for his audience ; and moreover that, in the presence of none but the other actors, who were grimly polite, and evidently predisposed against him, he felt nervous and constrained. I felt all this, but I said nothing, being naturally a reserved and cautious man. When the night came, the house was crowded to the ceiling. Barker, who well knew how to work the oracle in such cases, had been about the town talking incessantly of the new actor, of his handsome person, his gentlemanly manners, the mystery of his position, coming no one knew whither, being no one knew what ; and, in fact, had so excited public curiosity that all the leading people of the place were at the theatre. The private boxes were filled with the officers, handsome, vapid, and inane, thankful for the chance of any excitement, however small, to relieve the perpetual *ennui* ; in the centre of the house sat Podder, the genius of Wealborough, who had written seventeen five-act tragedies, one of which had been acted in London and damned, and who was intimately connected with the stage, his uncle having been godfather to Mr. Diddear ; the dress-circle was filled with the *belles* of the boarding-houses and their attendant cavaliers ; the pit was thronged with jolly young tradesmen and their wives, soldiers in uniform, and a sprinkling of the maritime popu-

lation of the place ; while in the gallery, wedged as it was from end to end with shirt-sleeved and perspiring youths, not a nut was heard to crack from the rise of the curtain until the end of the play, except once, at the first appearance of the Ghost of Hamlet senior, when the chemist's boy, a lad of weak intellect, whose bedroom looked upon the churchyard, shrieked aloud, and was led forth by the lobe of his ear by the constable in attendance.

Talk of a success ! Such cheering was never heard in Wealborough theatre before or since ! After Dacre had been on the stage five minutes the applause began, and whenever he appeared it was renewed with tenfold vigour, until the curtain fell. The sympathy of the audience seemed to extend to those actors who were on the stage with him ; but they would brook no delay which kept their favourite from them, and Duffer, who was playing the First Gravedigger, and who, as a last hope of retrieving his lost character, had put on seventeen waistcoats, and began to gag the “argal” speech tremendously, very nearly got soundly hissed. When the curtain fell, Dacre was vociferously called for, and his appearance before the curtain was a perfect ovation ; the ladies waved their handkerchiefs —the officers nearly thumped the front of their boxes in— the pit and gallery shouted applause ; while Podder, rising to his feet, spread his arms before him as if blessing the actor, and was heard to mutter, “The Swan ! the Swan !” alluding, it is presumed, to Shakespeare —not Dacre. Barker was in the highest spirits, seized the new actor by both hands (we thought he was going to embrace him), and then and there invited him and the entire company to an extempore supper to be provided at the adjacent tavern. Dacre, however, declined on the plea of excitement and over-fatigue, and at once retired to his lodgings. From that night his success was complete ; he played the entire round of juvenile tragedy parts, and on each occasion to

very large audiences ; he was the talk of the country for miles around ; all the provincial newspapers sang his praises, and soon the London theatrical journals began to speak of him, and to hope that a gentleman of such talent would soon visit the metropolis.

All this time he maintained towards Barker and all the members of his company the most studied politeness, the most chilling courtesy; except on business topics he never spoke—resolutely declined all attempts at intimacy, refused to partake of the proffered beer or spirits with which these jolly fellows refresh themselves of an evening ; and upon one occasion, when the aforesigned Duffer was uttering specially blasphemous language, rebuked him openly in the dressing-room, and, on receiving an insolent answer, administered to him such a shaking that Duffer nearly swallowed his false teeth. I do not think that I myself, though much quieter and steadier than the rest of the company, should ever have become intimate with Dacre but for the following circumstance : I was in the habit, when I had a new part to learn, of taking my manuscript in my pocket and going for a long walk upon the sands—not to the fashionable part, where the horses were perpetually galloping, the people promenading, and the children playing—but far away on the other side of the town, where I had it all to myself, and could declaim, and spout, and gesticulate as much as I pleased, without being taken for a lunatic. Several times, during my rambles, I had encountered Dacre walking with a lady of slight and elegant figure, closely veiled ; but nothing beyond a mere bow of recognition had passed between us ; one day, however, while declaiming to the winds the friendship I, as Colonel Damas, held for Claude Melnotte, in Bulwer's *Lady of Lyons*, then just produced, I thought I heard a cry for help, and looking round, perceived at some short distance Dacre kneeling by the extended form of the veiled mysterious lady. I hastened to him,

and found that the lady, who he stated was his wife, had been rambling among the rocks, gathering wild flowers, when her foot slipped, and she fell, striking her temple against a sharp flint, and inflicted a wound from which the blood was slowly falling.. Her face, of a chiselled and classic beauty, was deadly pale, and she was senseless ; but we bathed the wound with water, which I scooped up in my hat, and she soon recovered sufficiently for us to lead her gently to Dacre's lodgings. These were situated in one of the oldest parts of the old town, overlooking the sea, far from the bustle and confusion of the fashionable part ; and after rendering all the service I could, I eventually took my leave. From that day I became a constant visitor to those rooms, and gradually won the confidence and friendship of their occupiers ; many a night, after the theatre, I would accompany Dacre home, and after a light supper, prepared by his beautiful and affectionate wife, we would sit over the fire, while he, smoking an old German pipe, would talk of literature and poetry, or of what interested me even more—of his earlier life. He was the son of a wealthy Liverpool merchant, had been educated at a celebrated provincial school, and removed from thence to a German university, whence he only returned to find his father dead, his affairs hopelessly involved, and utter ruin staring him in the face. Without the smallest notion of business, and having always had a passion for acting, he had taken to the stage as a profession, and had offered himself to Barker, of whom he heard good reports ; bringing with him as his wife a young portionless girl, the daughter of a clergyman, to whom he had been attached since childhood, and who, at the period of their marriage, was gaining a subsistence as a governess in Liverpool. But the manners and habits of his fellow-actors disgusted him : they were a loose-thinking, underbred, vulgar lot, to whom he could not introduce his pure-thinking, simple-minded wife, and with whom he himself had no feel-

ing in common ; and he was but waiting an eligible opportunity to remove to the metropolis, where he thought, and justly, that his talents would soon secure him a position in that charming artistic society for which he pined, and for which he felt himself peculiarly fitted. This opportunity soon came. I had one night been playing Sir Peter Teazle in *The School for Scandal* and had been struck by the vehement applause and cries of "Bravo!" in a strident voice, which had proceeded from one of the private boxes, when Dacre as Charles Surface made his appearance on the scene ; and on going into the green-room after the curtain fell, I found a stout, middle-aged, black-whiskered, vulgar-looking man, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, standing in the middle of the room, and holding both Dacre's hands in his. This gentleman, I learned, was the well-known Mr. Batten Flote, manager of the Theatre Royal, Hatton Garden, who had come from town expressly to witness Dacre's performance. As I entered the room he was pouring forth the most profuse laudation. "Capital," he said, "capital, my boy ! There was the dash of Elliston, the grace of Kemble, and the rollicking humour of Wallack ! That's the sort of thing to bring 'em down ! Barker, my lad, you've been a fortunate fellow to get hold of such a trump card as this ! Let's have a bottle of sham together ! I'll stand it, and curse the expense !" I well enough knew what this meant, and so did Barker ; he fought up against it, and tried to look cheerful. When Dacre gave him notice that he was about to leave him (which he did the next Saturday), he gave vent to a burst of virtuous indignation, and bewailed the manner in which he had been treated ; then he made a faint offer of an additional five pounds a week, and finally took consolation by engaging a troop of performing dogs and monkeys, which he had heard of from a metropolitan correspondent, and getting a new piece written to display their acquirements.

So Dacre left us ; he took a farewell benefit, when the house was thronged ; and he and I had a farewell chat, principally about his future. Mr. Flote had engaged him at an excellent salary, promised him the best parts in the best pieces, and pledged himself to forward his views in every way ; and as the young man told me all this, his eye lighted, and he appeared a different being from what I had ever seen him. The London public, he said, should see that the race of gentlemanly actors was not extinct ; that there were yet men who could understand the passions which they had to portray, and appreciate the language set down for them to declaim ; he would not content himself with the creations of the old dramatists, but he would be the reflex of modern characters, the men of the day should see themselves represented by one of themselves, one equally well born, equally well educated, equally well dressed, equally well behaved. His wife, too, instead of passing her dreary evenings in a wretched lodging, should have companions worthy of her—companions to whose society his name would be a passport—society in which the most celebrated in literature and art were happy to mix. So he rattled on, and I, delighted at his prospects, but very sad at his departure, listened to him far into the night. Then we parted, with many promises of long letters to be interchanged, and of descriptions of all that had happened—on his side at least for my life seemed planned out, one unvarying disma repetition of old men's characters in a country theatre.

Dacre departed, and I was left alone, more alone even than I had been before I knew him, for he had inflicted me with his distaste for my professional brethren, and I mixed with them no more. So I walked upon the sands, and studied and read, and in my despair I even made friends with Podder, went to his room, drank weak tea, and listened to three of his tragedies without going to sleep. At last three weeks after Dacre left us, I reei ved from him a long

letter and a batch of newspapers; he had appeared as Claude Melnotte, and created a tremendous sensation. The press had unanimously pronounced in his favour, and their verdict was backed by the enthusiasm of the public. His letter was written in the highest spirits : from first to last he had been received with shouts of applause ; a royal duke had come into the green-room when the play was over and begged to make his acquaintance ; he was proposed at The Thespis, the great Dramatic and Literary Club ; the wives of two or three well-known literary men had called upon Mrs. Dacre ; Mr. Flote was most kind and liberal, and everything was *couleur de rose*.

Six months passed away ; we had visited the dull inland towns on our circuit during the dull winter season, and had been doing but a dull business ; I had heard but seldom from Dacre, though the newspapers still continued to give the most flaming accounts of his success, when one day, soon after our return to Wealborough, Barker came to me with a face radiant with joy, and announced that Dacre was coming to us for a month on a “starring” engagement. I was hurt at not having heard this intelligence from my friend himself, but I reflected on the charms of his position and his numerous engagements, and anxiously expected his arrival. He came, and I was astonished at the difference in his appearance ; from a fresh-coloured handsome youth he had become a pale anxious man, still handsome, but oh ! so worn, so haggard-looking. The change was not confined to his appearance : now, instead of the old lodgings with their cracked furniture and their desolate sea-view, he took handsome rooms on the Marine Parade, in the very centre of the fashionable part of the town ; every afternoon he was to be seen among the loungers on the promenade ; he dined constantly with the officers and entered into every kind of gaiety, I might almost say dissipation. To his fellow-actors he had always been distant, now his manner was positively

rude ; he avoided my society, and seemed ill at ease whenever he encountered me in the street; worst of all, for whole evenings together he neglected the society of his wife, and would pass his time after the theatre in mess-rooms, at billiard-tables, among the loose visitors to the town, and several times he was late in his arrival at the theatre, and when he did come he was evidently flushed with wine, most odd and incoherent in his speech. That I grieved deeply over this state of affairs I need scarcely say, and, after some deliberation, I took upon myself to speak to Dacre on the subject ; but his reply was so rude, so angry and decisive, that I saw at once all intervention was hopeless. He finished his engagement at Wealborough and returned to London, and from that time forth the accounts I received from him were bad indeed. Among theatrical people there is a great freemasonry and brotherhood ; we provincial professionals hear of all the triumphs of our London brethren ; and if their successes travel quickly and are much talked about, what shall I say of their failures? Dacre's great success had made him many enemies ; and the moment that there was anything to say against him a hundred tongues were but too ready to be the bearers of the news. Rumours reached us at Wealborough of his unsteadiness, of his want of care for his reputation, of his passion for dissipation, for excitement, for drink ; "stars" on their travels reiterated these rumours, adding to them choice little bits of their own fabrication, and at last *The Scarifier*, an infamous weekly newspaper then in being, but now happily extinct, had weekly paragraphs in which Dacre's name was coupled with that of the loveliest and most abandoned women that ever disgraced the theatrical profession.

About the time that these paragraphs appeared, I received an offer from the manager of the other great London theatre, the T. R., Gray's Inn Lane, an engagement as actor and stage-manager ; and as, independently of the position

and pecuniary emolument held out to me, I saw an opportunity of once more meeting Dacre, and perhaps of rescuing him from the abyss into which he had plunged, I gladly availed myself of it. Curiously enough, immediately after my arrival in London, the manager told me he wished to employ me on a rather delicate mission. Mr. Dacre, he said, had quarrelled with the Hatton Garden proprietors, and he was most anxious to engage him for the Gray's Inn Lane Theatre. He, the manager, had heard of my former intimacy with Dacre : would I now consent to be his ambassador? Delighted at the thought of once more seeing my friend, and thinking nothing of our recent quarrel, I consented. The next day I called on Dacre at an address in Brompton, which the manager had given me, and found him sitting in a room most elegantly furnished, opening into a little conservatory and garden. He was dressed in a handsome dressing-gown, Turkish trousers and slippers, and was lounging in a large arm-chair near an open piano ; on a round table in the centre of the room was a confused litter of playbills, manuscript "parts," books, light-kid gloves, some of the smallest size, some loose silver, and fragments and ashes of cigars ; on the wall hung a portrait of himself as Hamlet opposite to a print of Mrs. Lurley (the lady with whom his name had been associated in *The Scarifier*), in her favourite character of the Demon Page ; on the sofa lay a handsome Indian shawl, and an elegant airy fabric of black lace, which looked like a bird-nest, but was a bonnet. I noticed all these things as I entered, and my heart sank within me as I marked them. Dacre himself had much changed ; he had lost all his youthful symmetry, and had become a stout, bloated, unwholesome-looking man. He received me coolly enough, but when he heard my business he warmed into life ; and after listening to the terms proposed, accepted with an eagerness which I thought suspicious. Taking courage at his altered manner, I asked

after his wife. He became confused, hesitated, stammered, walked across to the cellaret, filled a liqueur-glass of brandy, which he drank, and then told me that she was not well, that she was out of town, that—in fact what the devil business was it of mine? I was about to reply, angrily enough this time, for his manner was most rude, and I knew I had right on my side, when a pert-looking lady's-maid entered the room and told Dacre that “the brougham was at the door, and missis was tired of waiting.” He reddened as he heard this, muttered some half-inaudible excuse about “a matter of business,” and bowed me out of the room. The next day, and for several days after, he attended rehearsals with great punctuality, and entered into the business of the piece with apparent attention; he was evidently striving to keep up his character, which had been a little damaged by the version of his quarrel with the Hatton Garden people, which Flote had circulated. To me his conduct was studiously polite: he consulted me as to setting of the scenes and the arrangements of the stage, but except on purely business questions he never addressed me.

The night of his first appearance at the Gray's Inn Lane Theatre arrived, a night which, to whatever age I may live, I shall never forget. Dacre's separation from Flote had caused a great excitement in the theatrical world, and all kinds of reasons were alleged for it; and on this night the house was crammed, many friends of Dacre and many supporters of Flote being among the audience. The play was a new five-act tragedy by a gentleman who has now made himself a name among the first dramatists of modern times; and all the London critical world was on tiptoe with expectation.

The curtain rose, and the beautiful setting of the scene received a volley of applause; two or three minor personages then entered and the audience settled themselves down, waiting in dead silence for Dacre's appearance. I saw him

for a minute before he went on to the stage, and noticed that he looked flushed and excited ; but, busied as I was with matter of minor detail, I had not time to exchange a word with him. His cue was given and he rushed upon the stage ; a thunder of applause greeted him, mixed with a few sibilations, which had only the effect of renewing and redoubling the approbation ; he took off his hat in recognition of the reception, but in doing so he staggered, and had to clutch at a neighbouring table. Then he essayed to speak ; but the words gurgled in his throat and he was inarticulate ; a cold shiver ran through me as I stood at the wing ; I saw at once the state of the case—*he was drunk!* The audience perceived it as readily as I did, a buzz ran round the house, a murmur, and then from boxes, pit, and gallery arose a storm of hissing and execration. Twice Dacre essayed to exert himself, twice he stepped forward and endeavoured to speak ; but in vain. Stupefied with drink, dazzled by the glare of the lights, and maddened by the howling of the mob in front of him, he was fairly cowed, and after taking one frightened glance around, rushed madly from the stage and from the theatre.

After this fatal night I did not see Dacre again for many months ; for though the management boldly contradicted the report of his drunkenness, and advertised boldly that the whole scene was the result of a scheme concocted by the enemies of the theatre, he never could be induced to return to the Gray's Inn Lane boards. Falling lower and lower in the social scale, he played for a week or two at a time at one after another of those dramatic “ saloons,” half-theatre, half-public-house, with which the East-end of London is thickly studded ; then went for a flying visit into the provinces, where he found his fame and position gone, and returned to the metropolis and his East-end patrons. I myself had also had my reverses of fortune ; the manager of the Gray's Inn Lane Theatre seemed to consider from

my previous intimacy with Dacre that I ought to bear some share in his failure, and made a point of snubbing me so outrageously that we soon parted company. I returned once more to Barker, who was glad enough to see me, though he did not forget to point the moral of that pleasant proverb relative to pride having a fall, in the presence of the whole company ; and after being with him some time, I at last, through the medium of an agent, made an engagement with the manager of an American *troupe*, who was about to make a theatrical tour through California.

At length, a few nights before I started for Liverpool to embark, and as I was sitting musing over past and future days, the servant of my lodgings brought me a small note, for an answer to which she said the messenger waited. It was written in a hurried tremulous female hand, and signed “Emily Dacre.” The writer stated that her husband was dangerously ill, and implored me, for the love of heaven, for the sake of our old friendship, to follow the messenger and come and see him. I hesitated but the instant ; then casting aside all thought of danger, I seized my hat, and, preceded by a ragged boy who had brought the note, hurried into the streets. Across broad thoroughfares, and far away into a labyrinth of miserable little streets and courts, I followed this will-o’-the-wisp—streets where pinching and unwholesome poverty reigned triumphant, and where the foul miasma was already rising on the damp evening air—streets where the shops were all small and all with unglazed windows and flaring gas-lights, where everything was very cheap and horribly nasty ; where the nostrils were offended with rank exhalations from stale herrings and old clothes, and where vice and misery in their most loathsome aspects met the eye. At last he stopped before one of the meanest private houses in the meanest street we had yet come through (though the neighbourhood was Clerkenwell, where all the streets are mean enough), and pushing the door open with his hand, beckoned me to follow him. He

preceded me to the second-floor, where he silently pointed to a door, and apparently delighted at having discharged his mission, instantly vanished down the stairs. I rapped, and, in obedience to a faint cry of "Come in," entered.

I was prepared for much, but what I then saw nearly overcame me; there was a swelling in my throat, a trembling of my limbs, and for a minute I felt unable to step forward. On a wretched trundle-bed, covered by a few miserable rags, lay Dacre, worn and reduced almost to a skeleton. He was asleep in that fitful uneasy slumber, that mockery of rest, which is granted to the fevered. As I bent over him I saw that his face was ghastly pale, except just under the closed eyes, where were spread two hectic patches. His thin arm lay outside the coverlet, and the attenuated fingers of his transparent hand twitched nervously with every respiration. His poor wife, so changed from the lovely girl I had known at Wealborough, so pallid and woe-begone, looking, in fact, so starved, sat on a broken rush-bottomed chair by the bedside; near her stood a rickety table with a few medicine-bottles, and the dried-up half of a lemon; an old felt-hat with a broken feather, an old cotton-velvet cloak with scraps of torn and tawdry lace hanging from it, and a pair of stage-shoes with red heels, were huddled together in a corner of the room. The poor woman told me, the tears streaming down her cheeks the while, that the dreadful propensity for drink had grown upon him hour by hour and day by day; that it had lost him every engagement, no manager caring to run the risk of his non-appearance at the theatre; and that for the past few days since he had been attacked with fever and delirium, they had been nearly destitute—the proceeds of the sale of his clothes being all they had to depend upon for support. The people of the house, she said, had been very kind to her, and had sent for the parish doctor, who came two or three times and sent medicine, but gave very little hope of his patient's recovery; indeed that morning he

had so evaded her questions, and shaken his head so solemnly, that she was terrified at his manner, and had ventured to solicit my presence and assistance.

A low moan from the sufferer here arrested her speech, and she ran quickly to the bedside. I turned and saw Dacre sitting up in the bed and resting on his elbow. So completely had drink and illness done their work that I should scarcely have recognised him : his long black hair fell in a tangled heap over his forehead; his thin hollow cheeks, ordinarily, after professional custom, so closely shaved, were now covered with thick black bristles; while his eyes, before so calm and steadfast, now glared wildly round him. I advanced and took his poor wasted hand, so hot and dry, between mine, said a few words of consolation, and trusted he felt better after his sleep. He gazed at me without any sign of recognition. "Ah, sleep!" he murmured, "nature's soft nurse! steep my senses in forgetfulness! Oh, my God, I wish she could, I wish she could!" He burst into a fit of sobbing, and hid his head between his hands. His poor wife advanced, and touched him gently on the shoulder. "Here is your old friend, Charles," she said; "your old friend from Wealborough, you know!" At the last words he raised his head. "Wealborough!" he cried. "What do you know of Wealborough? Yes, yes, we'll go back there; Barker, Foggles, I know them all—the long walks, the sea-shore, the blue, the fresh, the ever free! The mess-room too, and the claret, and—hush! the overture's on. Not yet, not yet—now." And he raised himself in the bed—"Bravo! bravo! no gagging, the real words—stick to your author, sir—stick to your author! What a reception—again—again—Will they never let me speak for applause?"

During his ravings he bowed his head repeatedly ; then, suddenly seizing me by the shoulder, he crept behind me, muttering in my ear: "Do you hear that hiss?—paid to do it, sir—paid by—no! there! there it is—that serpent there

at the back of the house—see him slowly unwinding his coils ! It is from him that awful sound comes ! See, he's creeping closer—he's about to spring upon me, and crush me in his folds. Help! help! Some drink ; give me some drink, Titinius, like a sick girl, like a sick girl !” During this paroxysm he had clutched my shoulder tightly, and almost screamed aloud ; but as he spoke the last words his grasp relaxed, he fell softly back upon the pillow, and slept quietly and peacefully. So we watched him during the night ; but towards morning he began to mutter in his sleep. He was apparently living again his student days, for he murmured scraps of German and of Latin, not as it is taught in England, but with a foreign accent ; his face wore a sweet smile, and he seemed happy. About day break he opened his eyes and clasped his hands, and moved his lips apparently in prayer. Then turning towards us, began speaking in disjointed sentences that magnificent soliloquy which the wisest and sweetest of poets has put into the mouth of Hamlet, commencing, “To be or not to be ?” So he continued for some time, muttering occasionally scraps of the same speech. At length a peculiar light broke over his countenance, and he beckoned to his trembling wife, who hastened to him. Twining his feeble arms around her, he imprinted one long kiss upon her forehead, then murmuring in an almost inaudible voice, “Nymph ! in thine orisons be all my sins remembered,” his grasp relaxed, and he fell back dead !

So ended the career of one who, under different circumstances and beyond the influence of those temptations which are the curse of the theatrical profession, might have lived long and happily, and died with weeping children round his bed. Before I left London I saw him decently buried in one of the metropolitan cemeteries ; and, further, induced the relatives of his poor widow to receive her to her former home.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LECTURED IN BASINGHALL STREET.

To the mercantile world the name of Basinghall Street is inseparably connected with the Bankruptcy Court, and the title of the present paper, cursorily glanced at, would argue but badly for the respectability of its author. Miserly uncles would shake their heads and glorify at the fulfilment of their predictions as to their nephew's ultimate end ; good-natured friends, and never-failing dinner convives, supper droppers-in, pipe-smokers and grog-drinkers, would shrug their shoulders and call upon each other to testify how often they had said that such a style of living could not continue ; the half-crown borrowers, charity seekers, sick-wife-and-children possessors, and all those purse-blisters who form a portion of every man's acquaintance, would crow and chuckle over his fallen body, and quickly make off to fatten on some other friend who yet could be made to bleed. But, though it has not come to this ; though, being a simple clerk, I have not yet taken brevet rank as a "trader" for the purpose of evading my creditors under the Bankruptcy Laws ; though I have not sold a few lucifer-matches to a convenient friend for the purpose of appearing as a timber-merchant, nor made over to my aunt any of my undoubted (Wardour Street) Correggios to figure as a picture-dealer ; though I have not been "sup-

ported" by Mr. Linklater, or "opposed" by Mr. Sargood; though Quilter and Ball have not yet received instructions to prepare my accounts; though the official assignee has had nothing to do with me, and though the learned commissioner has not been compelled, as a matter of duty, to suspend my certificate for six months, which is then to be of the third class—yet have I been lectured in Basinghall Street, and pretty severely too.

This is how it came to pass. Schmook, who is the friend of my bosom, and an opulent German merchant in Austin Friars, called on me the other day, and, having discussed the late fight, the new opera, the robbery at the Union Bank, and other popular topics, told me he could send me to a great entertainment in the City. I replied, with my usual modesty, that in such matters I had a tolerably large acquaintance. I mentioned my experience of Lord Mayors' banquets, and I enlarged, with playful humour as I thought, on the tepid collation thereat spread before you, on the ridiculous solemnity of the loving-cup, with its absurd speech, its nods and rim-wiping; on the preposterous stentorian toast-master, with his "Pray si-lence for the chee-aw!" on the buttered toasts and the drunken waiters, and the general imbecility of the whole affair. Diverging therefrom, I discoursed learnedly on the snug little dinners of City companies, from the gorgeous display of the Goldsmiths down to the humble but convivial spread of the Barbers. Schmook was touched, and it was some few minutes before he could explain that it was to a mental and not a corporeal feast that he wished to send me. At length he stammered out, "The Cresham legshire! Ver' zientifig! kost nichts! noting to bay!" and vanished overcome.

Schmook not coming to see me again, I had forgottē the subject of our conversation, when I lighted upon an advertisement in a daily paper setting forth that the

Gresham lectures for this Easter term would be given—certain subjects on certain named days—in the theatre of the Gresham College in Basinghall Street, in Latin at twelve o'clock, and in English at one. Wishing to know something of the origin and intent of these lectures, I applied to my friend Veneer, the well-known archæologist and F.S.A., but he was so engaged on his forthcoming pamphlet on Cuneiform Inscriptions that he merely placed in my hands a copy of Maunder's *Biographical Treasury*, open at the name of Sir Thomas Gresham, the page containing whose biography was surrounded with choice maxims. I proceeded with the biography, and learned that the good old "royal merchant" had by will founded seven lectureships for professors of the "seven liberal sciences," and that their lectures were to be given, gratis, to the people. And I determined to profit by Sir Thomas Gresham's bounty.

The social science which I chose to be lectured on was rhetoric, thinking I might gain a few hints for improving myself in neat after-dinner speeches and toast-proposings; and at a few minutes before noon on the first day, when this subject stood for discussion on the syllabus, I presented myself at the Gresham College. A pleasant-faced beadle, gorgeous in blue broadcloth and gold, and with the beaver-iest hat I had ever seen—a cocked-hat bound with lace like the Captain's in *Black-eyed Susan*—was standing in the hall, and to him I addressed myself, asking where the lecture was given.

"In the theatre, upstairs, sir. Come at one, and you'll hear it in English."

"Isn't it given in Latin at twelve?"

"Lor' bless you, not unless there's three people present, and *there never is!* I give 'em five minutes, but they never come! Pity, ain't it? He's here, all ready" (jerking his head towards an inner door), "he's got it with him; but there's never anybody to hear him, leastways werry seldom,

and then if there is three or four come in for shelter out of the rain or such-like, d'rectly he begins in Latin, and they can't understand him, they gets up and goes away!"

"Then they do come to the English lectures?"

"Bless you, yes; to some of them, lots, 'specially the music and the 'stronomy. Ladies come—lots of 'em—and the clerks out of the counting-houses hereabouts, for the music lecture's in the evening, you know; and they bring ladies with 'em—ah, maybe as many as a hundred!"

"Well, I'll go up and take my chance of somebody coming."

"You're welcome, sir, but I'm afraid you'll be the only one."

I went upstairs, and soon found myself in one of the prettiest lecture-theatres I had ever seen, semicircular in shape, and fitted with benches, rising one above the other, and capable of holding some five hundred people. The space allotted to the lecturer was partitioned off by a stout panelling, and was fitted with a red-covered table and a high-standing desk. There was also an enormous slate with traces of recent diagrams still unobliterated, and an indescribable something, like a gymnastic machine, behind it. I took a seat on one of the topmost benches, and remained there a solemn five minutes, in the midst of a silence and desolation quite appalling. At last I heard a footstep on the stone stairs, and I hoped, but it was the beadle's. "I told you so," he said, pleasantly. "I always gives 'em five minutes; now, if you want to hear the lecture, come again at one!"

I went up at one, and found what a Frenchman would call "*du monde*." There must have been fully seventeen people present. Close down against the rail partitioning off the lecturer's stage, was a crushed and spiritless man, with a fluffy head of hair, like a Chinchilla boa or an Angora cat, who seemed in the lowest possible spirits: leaning his head

against the oaken panelling in front of him, he kept groaning audibly. Immediately behind him sat two seedy old women, in damp, mildewed, lustreless black, with smashed bonnets, and long, black, perspiry old gloves, the fingers of which, far too long, doubled over as far as the knuckles. They looked more like superannuated pew-openers than old ladies, and kept conversing in a hoarse whisper, at every sentence addressing each other as “mem.” A little higher up, a fair-haired, light-whiskered man had ensconced himself against one of the pillars, and was cutting his nails. He was properly balanced on the other side of the hall by a black-bearded man, leaning against the opposite pillar, who scratched his head. Close by me, at the upper portion of the hall, were a very pretty girl and a savage fidgety old woman, probably her aunt. Next to the aunt, a spry man with blue spectacles, who commenced taking notes as soon as the lecturer opened his mouth—a man with a red nose and a moist eye, and a general notion of rum-and-water about him—probably in the appalling-accident, devouring-element, and prodigious-gooseberry line of literature; a misanthropic shoemaker, having on the bench beside him a blue bag bursting with boots, which diffused an acrid smell of leather and blacking; and a miserable old man in a faded camlet cloak, who sat munching an Abernethy biscuit between his toothless gums, and snowing himself all over with the fragments—made up our company. After the lecture had proceeded about five minutes, the door opened, and a thin, sharp-faced man, in very short trousers, very dirty white socks and low pumps, advanced two paces into the room, but he looked round deliberately, and after saying quietly: “Dear me! ah!” as though he had made a mistake, turned round and retreated.

At a few minutes after one, a very tall gentleman in a Master of Arts gown appeared at the lecture-table, and made a little bow. We got up a feeble round of applause to

receive him—such applause as three umbrellas and two pair of hands could produce—but he bobbed in acknowledgment of it, looked up at the gallery, which was perfectly empty, and commenced. He had such a low opinion of us, his audience, that he thought we could not read the syllabus, for, instead of Rhetoric, his lecture, he told us, was upon Taste. I am, I trust, a patient hearer. I have lectured myself, and have a feeling for the position of a man being compelled to stand up and endeavour to win the attention of a stupid and scanty audience. I think there are very few men in London who have been better bored than I have in the course of my life ; but I am bound to say that anything more appallingly dreary and uninteresting than the tall gentleman's discourse I never listened to. The matter was prosaic, *richauffé*, utterly void of originality, and thoroughly wearying ; the manner was that fatal sing-song generally indulged in by the English clergy, interspersed with constant desk-smitings, and with perpetual eye-reference to the gallery, where there was no one to respond. The effect upon the audience was tremendous : the Chinchilla-headed man, more crushed than ever, made a perfect St. Denis of himself, and had nothing mortal above the collar of his coat ; the light-whiskered man cut his nails to the quick in an agony of nervousness, and his black-bearded opposite scalped himself in despair ; the pretty girl went to sleep, and was roused at intervals by parasol-thrusts from her savage aunt ; the “liner” shut up his note-book and amused himself by reading some of the previous productions on flimsy paper ; the shoemaker glared indignantly, first at the lecturer, and then at anyone whom he could seduce into an eye-duel ; and the old Abernethy-eater betook himself to repairing a rent in his camlet cloak with a needle and thread. As for myself, I bore it patiently as long as I could, then I yawned and fidgeted, and at length taking advantage of my proximity to the door, I rose up

quietly, and slipped out, the last words echoing on my ear being, “This theory is that of Brown, and for further particulars I refer you to his work on Intellectual Philosophy ;” a work which, it strikes me, was doubtless to be found on the book-shelves of all the audience.

As I walked home, I pondered on the fitness of these things, and wondered whether, in the strange course of events, the law would ever be able to comply less with the letter, and more with the spirit, of the intentions of a good and great man ; and if so, whether instead of an unintelligible Latin lecture, and a preposterous English one, it would ever provide really good intellectual and moral culture gratis for London citizens, as was undoubtedly intended by the brave old Sir Thomas Gresham.

CHAPTER XXX.

HAUNTED HOXTON.

At last my guilty wishes are fulfilled ! At last I am enabled to look back into the past, and think that one great object of my life has been realised, for I have seen a GHOST ! Shade of (ah ! by-the-way, I forget the name of the shade, and I've left the document which could inform me in my overcoat pocket !—never mind !)—sacred shade, who appeared simultaneously to me and to some hundreds of entranced people, thou hast, so far as I am concerned, set the vexed question of apparitions at rest for ever. My interest in the ghost subject has been intense. I have read every story bearing upon it, and worked myself up to a delightful pitch of agonised excitement. Alone, and in the dead of night, do I peruse the precious volumes ; the mere fact of the scene being laid in “an old castle in the Black Forest,” gives me a pleasing sensation of terror ; when the student seated alone in the tapestried rooms finds “the lights begin to burn with a blue and spectral hue,” I shake ; when there “reverberates through the long passages a dismal clanking of chains,” I shiver ; finally, when “the door bursts open with a tremendous crash,” and there enters “a tall figure clothed in white, with one clot of gore immediately below its heart,” I am in a state of transcendent bliss, and only long to have been in the student’s place.

Some years ago I thought I had a chance of realising my hopes. I read a book called, I think, *The Nightgown of Nature*, the author of which announced that he—or she—was thoroughly well acquainted with several houses where spectres appeared nightly with unexampled punctuality—houses “within a convenient distance from London, and accessible by rail,” as house-agents say; and I wrote to him or her—for the address of one of these houses, stating that I intended to pass a night there. He—or she—replied that though his—or her—statement was thoroughly correct, he—or she—must decline giving the address of any particular house, as such a course would be detrimental to the value of the property, and might render him—or her—liable to an action at law on the part of the landlord. So I was disappointed.

I heard, however, the other day, that a real ghost, real as to its unreality, its impalpability, its visionary nothingness, was to be seen in a remote and unknown region called Hoxton. I had previously heard that the same, or a similar spectre, haunted Regent Street; but I laughed at the notion. Regent Street! with the French boot-shop, and the ice-making man, and the Indian-pickle dépôt opposite! A ghost in juxtaposition to electrical machines, a diver who raps his helmet with halfpence, and the awful insects in the drop of water! But Hoxton—there was something ghostly in the very name, and the place itself was as unfamiliar to me as Tierra del Fuego. Nobody to whom I spoke knew anything about it; they “had heard the name;” it was “somewhere out north,” they thought. Ah! in an instant my fancy sketches the spot. A quaint old suburb, where the railway has not yet penetrated, where sleepy cows chew the cud of peace in quiet meadows, where ploughmen whistle o'er the lea (whatever that may happen to mean), where huge elms yet stand waving their giant limbs before square red-brick mansions. One of these mansions for

years untenanted, roofless, dismantled, a murder was committed in it years ago : an old man with silver hair, a spendthrift nephew, a box of gold, a carving-knife, a well in garden where weapon is discovered years afterwards, a wailing cry at twelve P.M., a tottering figure wringing its hands—yes, that must be it, or something very like it ! I determined to go to Hoxton that night.

There was no railway—so far I was right—and I went to my destination in a cab. After a little time I found we were striking out of the great thoroughfares of commerce into narrow by-lanes, where a more pastoral style of living prevailed ; where fried fish of a leathery appearance lay in tangled heaps on the slabs of windowless fish-shops ; where jocund butchers, seemingly on the best terms with their customers, kept up a perpetual chorus of “Buy, buy !” and slapped the meat before them with a carving-knife and a gusto that together seemed to give quite an appetite to the hesitating purchaser. We passed several graveyards deep set in the midst of houses—dank, frouzy, rank, run-to-seed places, where Pelions of “Sacred to the memory” were heaped upon Ossas of “Here lieth the remains,” and out of which the lank sapless grass trembled through the railings and nodded feebly at the passers-by. Good places for ghosts these ! City ghosts of misers and confidential clerks, and trustees who committed suicide just before the young gentleman whom they had had in trust came of age and would have infallibly found out all about their iniquities. I peered out of the cab in quest of any chance apparition, but saw none ; and was very much astonished when the driver, to whom I had given particular instructions, pulled up before a brilliantly-lighted doorway, round which several cadgers were disporting themselves. These youths received me with great delight, and one said : “ You come along with me, sir ! I’ll take you to the hout and houtest old spectre in the neighb’r’ood. This way, sir ! ” He led the way

along a lighted passage, between rough brick walls, until we arrived at a barrier, where—after a muttered conversation between my guide and the janitor—a shilling was demanded of me, after paying which I was provided with a card talisman, and left to find my way alone. Down a broad passage, on one side of which was a recess where sandwiches lay piled like deals in a timber-yard, where oranges were rolled up in pyramidal heaps of three feet high, and where there was so much ginger-beer that its simultaneous explosion must infallibly have blown the roof off the building, down a flight of asphalted stairs, at the bottom of which a fierce man wrung my card talisman from me and turned me into a large loose box, the door of which he shut behind me. A loose box with a couple of chairs in it, a looking-glass, a flap table—a loose box open on one side, looking through which opening I see hundreds of people ranged in tiers above each other. Turning to see what they are all intent on, I see a stage—I'm tricked ! I'm done ! the loose box is a private box, and I'm in a theatre !

Left to myself, what could I do but look at the stage, and, doing that, how could I fail to be intensely interested ? I speedily made myself acquainted with the legend being there theatrically developed, and, beyond that the colour was, perhaps, a little heightened, I did not find it more or less preposterously unlike anything that could, by any remote possibility, ever have occurred than is usual in dramatic legends. The scene of action being laid at the present time, I found the principal character represented to be a BARONET (he had a name, but he was invariably spoken of by everybody, either with yells of hatred or shoulder-shrugs of irony, as “the Baronet”), and certainly he was the most objectionable old gentleman I have ever seen. The mere fact of his walking about, in the present day, in a long claret-coloured coat, a low-crowned hat with a buckle in the front, and boots which, being apparently made of sticking-

plaster, had tassels like bell-pulls, was in itself irritating ; but his moral conduct was horrible. He seemed to have an insane desire for the possession of his neighbours' property, not felonious in his intentions, but imbued with a buying mania, and rabidly ferocious when said neighbours refused to sell. First among his coveted possessions stood the house and garden of a clergyman's widow (no mistake about her widowhood ! the deepest black, and such a cap, all through the piece !), who obstinately refused to part with an inch of her ground. Baronet smiles blandly, and informs us that he will "have recourse to stratagem." Widow has two daughters, one very deep-voiced and glum, the other with her hair parted on one side (which, theatrically, always means good nature), and funny. Funny daughter is beloved by Baronet's son—unpleasant youth in cords, top-boots, and a white hat, made up after Tom King the highwayman, vide *Turpin's Ride to York; or, The Death of Black Bess* (Marks, Seven Dials), passim. Baronet proposes that son should get clergyman's daughter to steal lease of premises, promising to set son up in life, and allow him to marry object of affections. Son agrees, works upon daughter's vanity ; daughter, who is vague in Debrett, is overcome by notion of being called the Right Honourable Mrs. —, a title which, as the wife of a baronet's son, she is clearly entitled to—steals the lease, hands it to son, who hands it to Baronet, who, having got it, nobly repudiates not merely the whole transaction, but son into the bargain : tells him he is not son, but merely strange child left in his care, and comes down and winks at audience, who howl at him with rage.

That was the most wonderful thing throughout the evening, the contest between the audience and the Baronet. Whenever the Baronet made a successful move (and Vice had it all its own way for nearly a couple of hours), the audience howled and raved against him, called "Yah !"

whistled, shrieked, and hooted, and the Baronet advanced to the footlights and grinned across them, as though he should say : “ I’m still all right, in spite of you ! ” When a villain, who, for a sum of money advanced by the Baronet, had murdered an old man, and was afterwards seized with remorse, stole the lease from the Baronet’s pocket, the multitude in the theatre cheered vociferously ; but the Baronet, after proving that the purloined parchment was only a copy, and not the original document, which he still retained, calmly walked down to the front of the stage, and literally winked at the people, tapping his breast, where the lease was, in derision, and goading the audience to the extremity of frenzy.

There were several pleasant episodes in which the Baronet was the mainspring : hiding fifty-pound notes in the glum sister’s bundle, accusing her of robbery, and having her locked up in his house, whence she was rescued by the murdering villain who had previously (out of remorse) set the house on fire ; but at length the widow, who a minute before had been remarkably lively, and had “ given it ” to the Baronet with great vehemence and cap-shaking, suddenly declared her intention of dying ; and though a young gentleman with a sugar-loaf hat and a coat with a little cape to it, like the pictures of Robespierre, announced himself as a lawyer, who would defend her and hers against anything and everybody, she forthwith carried out her intention, sat down on a chair, and died out of hand. There was a faint pretext of sending for the doctor ; but there was an evident fear on the part of most lest that practitioner should really restore the patient, and thus burk the great effect of the piece ; so the idea was overruled, and the Baronet, advancing to the footlights, rubbed his hands in derision at the audience ; and the audience, cognisant of the fact that the decease of the widow was necessary to the subsequent appearance of her ghost,

merely answered with a subdued “Yah!” At this point my former conductor opened the box-door and beckoned me out. “Come in front,” he said; “it’s ghost-time!” The words thrilled to my very soul; I followed him in silence, and took my place in the boxes, close by a lady whose time was principally occupied in giving natural sustenance to her infant, and an older female, apparently the child’s grandmother, who was a victim to a disease which I believe is popularly known as the “rickets,” and which impelled her at three-minute intervals to shudder throughout her frame, to rock herself to and fro, to stuff the carved and hooked black bone handle of an umbrella, that looked like a tied-up lettuce, into her mouth, and to grind out from between her teeth, clenched round the umbrella-handle: “Oh deary, deary me!” On my other side were a youth and maiden, so devoted to each other that they never perceived my entrance into the box, and I had not merely to shout, but to shove, before I could effect a passage, when there was such a disentanglement of waists from arms, and interlaced hot hands, and lifting of heads from shoulders, that I felt uncomfortable and apologetic, whereas the real offenders speedily fell back into their old position, and evidently regarded me as a Byronic creature, to whom life was a blank.

The ghost did not appear at once. Though the widow had slipped into a very stiff position in her chair, and everybody round her had said either “Ha!” or “The fatal moment!” or “Alas!” or “All is over!” as their several tastes led them, it was thought necessary to make the fact of her death yet more clear; so upon the front parlour, where the sad occurrence took place, fell a vast body of clouds of the densest kind, out of which, to slow music, there came two or three ethereal persons with wings, which wagged in a suspicious manner, bearing the widow’s body “aloft,” as Mr. Dibdin has it with reference to Tom

Bowling, and thereby copying in the most direct and unequivocal manner (but not more directly and unequivocally than I have seen it in theatres of grand repute, where critics babbled of the manager's transcendent stage-direction) Herr Lessing's picture of Leonore. To meet these, emerged, in mid-air from either side of the stage, other ethereal persons, also with wings, whose intended serenity of expression was greatly marred by the obstinacy of the machinery, which propelled them in severe jerks, at everyone of which the set smile on their faces faded into a mingled expression of acute bodily pain and awful terror lest they should fall down: while, on a string like larks or a rope like onions, there swayed to and fro across the proscenium a dozen of the stoutest and most unimaginative naked Cupids that ever got loose from a valentine, or were made by a property-man.

As the act-drop fell upon this scene, which in itself represented something not to be met with in everyday life, some distrust was expressed in my neighbourhood lest there should be nothing more ghostly than we had just witnessed; but the old lady with the umbrella set us to rights by recovering suddenly from a severe attack of rickets, and exclaiming: "*Them* ghosts! Oh no, sir! In the next ack we shall see *her*, and which the music will play up for us to give attention." So accordingly, when the fiddles wailed, and the trombone and clarionet prostrated themselves figuratively in the dust, I looked with all my eyes, and saw the curtain rise upon the Baronet's apartment, which was the most singularly-constructed room I ever beheld. The portion of the floor nearest to us was perfectly flat, as is the case with most floors, but after about three feet of flatness there rose in its centre, and stretching from side to side, a long, sloping, green mound, in military language a "glacis," up which the Baronet had to walk when he wanted to proceed towards the back of the apartment, where all the chairs,

tables, and furniture generally had withdrawn themselves, and up which he himself climbed, as though M. Vauban had taken the place of Mr. Cubitt, and as though outworks and entrenchments were as common in London drawing-rooms as lounging-chairs and grand pianos.

On the top of this entrenchment stood, on either side two thick dumpy pillars, supporting a heavy piece of masonry, which joined them together at the top, and which looked like a portion of the ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbek seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass : or, to use an illustration nearer home, like the front of the catacombs of Kensal Green or Highgate cemeteries. Between these pillars was a hazy vista into which the Baronet walked, and seating himself on a stool in the corner, so as to be quite out of the way, commenced informing us (without any apparent necessity for the statement) of his disbelief in all supernatural appearances, and of his thorough contempt for Death—ha ! ha ! The second of the two vocal double-knocks given by him in ha ! ha ! had scarcely been given, when there appeared in the middle of the empty space behind the pillars a stereoscopic skeleton exactly like that which dances in the *Fantoccini*—so like, that one looked for the string which guides that puppet's movements (and which, of course, in the present instance, was not to be seen), and expected him momentarily to fall to pieces and re-unite in a comic manner. At this sight the Baronet appeared a little staggered ; he said, “Ha ! do I then behold thee ?” and retreated several paces on his heels, but recovering himself, exclaimed, “ ’Tis a dream, an ill-yousion !” and advanced towards the skeleton, which disappeared, to return immediately armed with a dart, or harpoon, with which it made several well-intentioned but harmless thrusts at the Baronet, who appeared immensely flabbergasted by the harpoon, and begged piteously to be spared. Either the skeleton was moved by the appeal or

he had work somewhere else, for he disappeared again ; and no sooner was he gone than the Baronet so plucked up that he declared he defied Death altogether, and was beginning to be offensively joyous, when in the place where the skeleton had been, appeared the ghost of the widow in her shroud ! No mistake about it now ! There she was, a little foreshortened, a little out of the perpendicular, leaning forward as though accustomed to a cramped and confined space, and not daring to stand upright ! For the Baronet this was, to use a vulgar metaphor, a “corker.” He rubbed his head, but there was nothing there ; he tried a taunt, but the ghost answered him with deep-voiced briskness ; he rushed towards her, and rushed right through her ! Finally, he picked up from the table, where, as we know, they always lie in libraries, a long sword, with which he aimed a very unskilful blow at his visitant. The sword passed through the ghost, who was apparently tickled, for it exclaimed, “Ha, ha !” and disappeared, and the Baronet fell exhausted in the very spot where the ghost had been ! Up went the lights, down went the curtain, and the audience gave one great gasp of relief, and pretended they hadn’t been frightened—which they had !

Unquestionably ! undoubtedly ! The skeleton had been a failure ; ribalds in the pit had mocked at him—had given tremulous cries of feigned terror—shouted “O-oh ! m—y !” and pretended to bury their heads in their jacket-collars ; boys in the gallery had called upon him to dance, and had invited their friends to “look at his crinoline ;” the arm of the youth in front of me tightened round the waist of the maiden with evident conveyance of the idea that *that* alone could them part ; and the old lady with the umbrella had considered him a “mangy lot.” But the ghost was a very different matter ; when it appeared, not a sound in the pit, not a whisper in the gallery ; all open-mouthed, eager, tremulous excitement ! The old grandmother clasped the

umbrella like a divining-rod, and muttered a hoarse “ Deary —dea—ry me ! ” the mother let the infant fall flat and flaccid on her lap, the youth’s arm unbent, and the maiden rising stiffly three inches from her seat, said, “ Go’as ! ” and remained rigid. Only one sound floated on the air, and that was emitted by a French gentleman, with more buttons on his waistcoat than I ever saw on a similar amount of cloth (how on earth did a foreigner penetrate to Hoxton?), who clutched his curly-brimmed hat between his fat fists, and hissed out : “ A—h ! superbe ! ”

It was his testimony, and it is mine.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VERY HARD UPON MY AUNT.

AT five o'clock on the evening of the 31st of December, 1849, Mr. Twinch, of Grosvenor Street, rushed into his dining-room with a packet in his hand, sat down at a little Davenport writing-table in the window, and scribbled off the following letter :

“ MY DEAR MADAM,—I am delighted to say that I have been able to keep my word, and herewith send you what you require. With best compliments, I am,

“ Faithfully yours,

“ PAYNHAM TWINCH.”

This note he folded round the packet, placed both in a stout envelope, which he addressed “ Miss L. Pemberton, The Grove, Heavitree, near Exeter ; ” carried the packet to a neighbouring receiving-office, caused it to be duly registered, and with the receipt in his pocket returned home.

Miss Letitia Pemberton was my father's youngest sister, a maiden lady of middle age, kind, amiable, and accomplished, whom everybody liked for her good temper, and whom many of us younger ones regarded with deep interest on account of what we were pleased to term “ her romance.” For when Aunt Letitia was a girl she was very pretty, and was a county beauty, and a reigning toast for miles round : she had scores of admirers, but behaved very scornfully to all of them, and she had acquired a reputation of being

thoroughly heartless, when she chose to tumble head-over-ears in love with a Mr. Butterworth, a fair-haired, mild, spooney young man, who had come up from Oxford to read with my father during the long vacation. Of course Mr. Butterworth responded, and the affair was progressing to the great satisfaction of the lovers, and the intense delight of my father, who thereby was relieved from much of Mr. Butterworth's society and all his tuition. But when my grandfather, who was what is called "one of the old school," a remarkably peppery veteran, discovered what was going on, he showed Mr. Butterworth the door, and was with great difficulty restrained from kicking him through it. Aunt Letitia wept and sulked by turns, but it was of no use ; and soon afterwards my father heard that Butterworth had left Oxford, and gone out as a private secretary and companion to an old gentleman who held some high official appointment in South America. Miss Letitia redoubled her lamentations ; but that was the last that was heard of Mr. Butterworth.

Until years after, when my grandfather had been long since dead, my father long since married, myself and my sister long since born, and my Aunt Letitia long since resident with us at The Grove, my father, in London on some business, accidentally ran against a portly gentleman in the Strand, who, turning round with hurt dignity, revealed the features of the mild Mr. Butterworth of bygone years. He told my father that his patron had died, leaving him his fortune ; that he had married in South America, but that his wife had died, within a twelvemonth of their union, and that he had come home to settle in England. He asked my father for all his news, and wound up by saying : "And—Miss Letitia—is—she—still—?" And my father said she was—still—but that Butterworth had better see for himself. This proposition seemed to suit Mr. Butterworth entirely. He should be in Devonshire about the end of the year ; he had business at Exeter. Finally

it was decided that he should dine on New Year's Day at The Grove, and pass the night there.

When my father came home with the news, my Aunt Letitia was tremendously affected. We noticed next morning that a kind of dust-trap of black lace, skewered on to a comb which she was in the habit of wearing at the back of her head, had been got rid of, and that she had a mass of plaits in its place ; we noticed that the usual night-shirt hemming for the charity children had been put aside, and that a large portion of her day was spent in devouring the poetical works of the late Lord Byron, in a *Galignani* edition brought from Paris by my father many years before. We noticed—we could not help noticing—how pretty she looked with her bright complexion, her white teeth, her neat little figure, and as the days passed by she seemed to grow more and more animated. One day, however—I remember it perfectly, it was the 16th of December, and we had boiled beef for dinner—my aunt was taken dreadfully ill ; it was at the dinner-table, when, without the slightest warning, she suddenly gave a sharp scream, placed her handkerchief to her mouth, and rushed from the room. My mother followed, and so did my sister, but the latter had my aunt's bedroom-door slammed in her face. When my mother rejoined us, she had a little private conversation with my father, and we were then told that Aunt Letitia was very ill, and would probably have to keep her room for many days. All sorts of invalid's delicacies, broth, soups, calf's-foot jelly, and sago puddings, were sent up to her ; but she did not reappear amongst us, and it seemed very doubtful whether she would be able to do so by the time of Mr. Butterworth's visit.

I must now change the venue, as the lawyers call it, of my story. At midnight, on the night when Mr. Twinch posted his letter, the down night-mail running between Paddington and Plymouth was within ten miles of the station at Exeter. In the travelling post-office two clerks,

with their warm caps drawn far down over their ears, were sorting letters for dear life, one or other of them turning round now and then and objurgating old Barnett, the mail-guard, who occasionally opened the window and pushed his head out to inform himself of the train's whereabouts, bringing it back always with a puff, and a snort, and an exclamation that the frost was a "reg'lar black 'un to-night, and no mistake." Close upon Exeter now, all old Barnett's sacks for delivery are ready on the floor close by the door, handy for the porters to seize, old Barnett himself sitting on the pile, clapping his hands, stamping his feet, and whistling to himself softly the while. With a protracted grind, a bump, and a shriek, the train ran alongside the Exeter platform, and old Barnett pushed back the sliding-door of the travelling-office and handed the sacks to the expectant porter. But ere the man touched them, he said, while his face was ghastly white and his voice trembled : "Lord, Mr. Barnett ! such a smash to-night !"

"Smash !" said old Barnett ; "what, an accident ?"

"Pooh !" said the porter, "not that, that would be nothing—no—they've robbed the up-mail !"

"Robbed the up-mail !"

"Ah, tender broke open, bags all cut and hacked, and letters all strewn about the floor. You never see such like !"

"The deuce they have !" said Barnett, after a moment's pause ; "well, Simon, my boy, I'll take devilish good care they don't rob my mail. Here, clear these bags out, and let's pass." He jumped down on to the platform, ran to the next carriage, which was the "post-office tender," a second-class carriage fitted up for the reception of mail-bags, unlocked the door with a key, saw all secure, relocked the door, and returned to the travelling post-office just as the train began to move.

Old Tom Barnett had been in the Post-office service in one capacity or other for nearly forty years, during the whole of which time no word of complaint had ever been

uttered against him, and, a strict disciplinarian himself, he naturally felt that there must have been some dereliction of duty on the part of his brother-guard of the up-mail, of which the robbers had taken advantage. Consequently, as the train flew through the black darkness at forty-mile-an-hour speed, Barnett, at five-minute intervals, lowered the window of the travelling-office and peered out in the direction of his "tender." He could not distinguish much ; all he could make out (and this principally from the shadows thrown on the embankments) was that the train was, as usual, a short one : that immediately after the engine came two second-class carriages, then the travelling-office in which he was, then his tender, then a first-class carriage, and then finally a luggage-van. Nothing particular was to be seen, nothing at all (save the invariable ramping, roaring, and rattle) was to be heard ; on they sped through the darkness, and never stopped until they came to Bridgewater, where old Barnett descended, took his key from his pocket, unlocked the tender, and—fell back, calling, at the top of his voice: "Help!—thieves!—damme, they've done me!" At his cry, two of the train-guards came running up, and turned their bull's-eye lanterns on to the tender, into which Barnett at once climbed. The mail-bags, ordinarily so neatly arranged, lay scattered in pell-mell disorder on the floor, the Plymouth bag had been shifted from the hook on which it had been hung, and, on examining it, Barnett found it had been opened, and retied but not resealed ; short bits of string, splotches of sealing-wax, and drifting pieces of tindered paper covered the floor of the tender, and the window on the farther side—which had been carefully closed when they left Bristol—was open. "They've done me!" roared old Barnett again ; "but they shan't escape ! they're somewhere in this train, and I'll have them out !"

At this juncture two gentlemen, one of whom was recognised as Mr. Marlow, one of the directors of the company, the other as Mr. Joyce, the great contractor, to whom the

safe keeping of a great portion of the permanent way was confided, came up and inquired what was the matter. On the affair being explained to them, they agreed with Barnett as to the necessity for closely searching the train, and all proceeded at once to the first-class carriage which was immediately next to the post-office tender. This, as is usual, was divided into three double compartments. The first was that from which Messrs. Marlow and Joyce had just emerged, and was, of course, empty; so was the second; in the nearest division of the third compartment was an old gentleman named Parker, well known on the line as a solicitor of Modbury, whose business frequently took him to London. The door between the divisions in this carriage was closed and the blind drawn down. On being recognised, Mr. Parker at once answered to his name, and stated that the farther division was occupied by two men who had entered the carriage at Bristol, and had at once closed the door and drawn down the blind. Had he noticed anything further about them? No, he had not. Yes! as they got in he noticed something dragging after them; unperceived by them, he put down his hand and found it to be a piece of string. He cut off what remained on his side when they shut the door, and here it was. Barnett looked at it, and exclaimed: "Bag-string! official bag-string without a doubt!" One of the railway-guards, then opened the door and looked into the other division. In it were two men; one of them, with a Jim Crow hat pulled over his eyes and enveloped in a large thick cloak, was lying with his legs upon the opposite seat, and was apparently suffering from toothache, as he held his pocket-handkerchief up to his face; the other, a tall man in a dark Chesterfield greatcoat, was screwed into his corner of the carriage and appeared to be asleep. "Tickets, please!" called out old Barnett; and as the reclining man raised himself to get at his ticket, the handkerchief fell from his face and the railway-guard recognising him at once, called

out: "Hallo, Pond ! is that you ? What are you doing down the line ?" Instead of answering this question, Pond told the guard to go to the devil ; but Mr. Marlow had heard the exclamation, and asked the guard whether the man in the carriage was Pond, formerly a guard in their service, who had been dismissed some six months before on suspicion of robbery. The guard replying in the affirmative, old Barnett's previous suspicions were fully confirmed, and he insisted on having both the men (who, of course, declared they were strangers to each other) thoroughly searched. Nothing at all extraordinary was found on either of them, but from the pocket of the carriage in which they had been travelling were taken a crape mask, a pair of false mustachios, a bit of wax-candle, and some sealing-waxed string. As the time for the starting of the train had now arrived, old Barnett and Mr. Parker travelled in one compartment with Pond, while the two railway-guards took charge of his anonymous friend, and thus they journeyed to Plymouth, where, on their arrival at the station, the prisoners were at once taken into one of the waiting-rooms under Barnett's custody, while the others proceeded to search the carriages for further traces of the robbery. That was an anxious time for old Tom Barnett ; he felt convinced that these were the culprits; but if they had made away with their spoil, if something were not found the identification of which could be ratified beyond doubt, he knew that the prosecution would fail. At last the men entered bearing a bundle. "Here it is ; all right !" said one of them.

"What is it ?" asked Barnett.

"A lot o' registered letters, most of 'em broke open, tied up in pocket-ankerchief and shoved under the seat where Pond was sittin'"

"Brayvo !" cried old Barnett, "brayvo ! But have you got anything that can be identified, anything that can be swore to ?"

"Well, I don't know!" said the guard, grinning. "I don't think there'll be much difficulty in the owner's swearin' to *this!*" and he held up the torn cover of the packet which Mr. Twinch had posted. Old Barnett glanced at its contents, then clapped his hands and burst into a roar of laughter.

The fact that the postman who called at The Grove as usual on the 1st of January brought no letter for my Aunt Letitia, created immense consternation in our family circle. My mother seemed much vexed; and even my father, usually a taciturn man, allowed that it was "confoundedly unfortunate." As for my aunt, we never heard what happened, but it was generally understood that she had a relapse. The day passed on, and Mr. Butterworth arrived; he manifested great concern at hearing of my aunt's illness, and plainly showed that he had missed the real object of his visit. He was dull and silent; and when my mother left the gentlemen sitting over their wine, scarcely a word was exchanged between them, and my father was just nodding off to sleep when he was aroused by a loud ring at the gate, followed by the entrance of the servant, who stated that a rough-looking man wanted to speak to Miss Letitia, and would take no denial. My father immediately went out into the hall, closely followed by Mr. Butterworth, and there they found a tall fellow, who introduced himself as a member of the county constabulary, and who reiterated his wish to speak with (apparently reading from something in his hand) "Miss L. Pemberton."

"You can't see her," said my father: "she's ill, and in her room. I'm her brother; what do you want?"

"Well, sir," said the man ponderously, "there have bin a robbery, and we want the lady to swear to some of the swag."

"Some of the swag?" said Mr. Butterworth.

"Some of the swag!" repeated my father. "What does the man mean!"

"Why the man means just this," said the constable;

“the mail’s been robbed, and ‘mongst the things broke open was this addressed to Miss L. Pemberton. There won’t be no difficulty about her recognisin’ it, I fancy.” And as the wretch spoke he drew from a packet a top row of dazzling false teeth.

Yes, that was the secret of Aunt Letitia’s illness. A year or two before, when nature failed her, she called in the assistance of art, and availed herself of the services of Mr. Twinch; but an accident occurring on the fatal boiled-beef day, the teeth were sent back to their creator, who had the strictest injunctions to return them, renovated, by the 1st of January. Mr. Twinch obeyed these orders implicitly; and, had not Mr. Pond and his friend selected that very night for the robbery of the mail, all would have been well. As it was, the teeth were detained by the lawyers for the prosecution until after the trial, at which they were produced, and at which my aunt also ~~was~~ compelled to appear, though strongly against her will. But, when once on her mettle, she behaved with great spirit, and gave her evidence with such clearness (albeit with a pretty lisp), that she was complimented by the judge, and was the main cause of Mr. Pond and his friend being found guilty, and sentenced to fifteen years’ transportation.

It has never been known to this day whether Mr. Butterworth was in court. At all events, three days after he called at The Grove, and then found that he had business which would oblige him to take lodgings in the neighbourhood for a month. At the end of that time I was measured for a new suit of clothes, and wore them one morning when they seemed to have dinner—champagne, cold fowls and things—at twelve o’clock; when Mr. Butterworth had on a blue coat, and when Aunt Letitia laughed a good deal, and cried all over my new jacket, as she bade us good-bye, and told us she was then Mrs. Butterworth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOTSPUR STREET, W.

READER, I am a vagabond ! seriously and literally a vagabond ! born with vagabond tastes and habits, of parents who, by Act of Parliament, were vagabonds (and rogues too, for the matter of that !), as were Shakespeare, Garrick Quin, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and all others of the same profession. As a boy I pursued a vagabond career ; was a dirty boy—a hot boy—an untractable boy—a boy with mangled knees and burst elbows—a defiant, truculent, idle, impudent chaffing boy—clever as to orchard burglaries ; insolvent through an overweening love of hardbake ; premature in a longing for tobacco !—a boy to whom Virgil was an enemy, and Euclid an abomination, but whose friendship for a duodecimo Byron was unbounded, and who could quote long passages from a thumbed and dirty Keats, purchased at a bookstall from the proceeds of a sale of a Cornelius Nepos. As a young man, I have still been a vagabond ; not the “Tom, you vagabond !” the nephew of the rich and testy old uncle in the standard comedy, as Tom is generally a dashing spendthrift, who consorts with dukes and marquises, and loses large sums at the Cocoa Tree ; but a person with a taste for the odd and strange, for curious company and associates, for night wanderings in out-of-the-way places, for long summer days spent with brown-skinned gipsies and spangled acrobats, for long and familiar conversations with Punch proprietors, cheap Jacks,

and other frequenters of the racecourse ; with a love for talent, natural or acquired, in any shape, however humble ; and with an unmitigated aversion to mediocre respectability. I have seen a good deal of respectability, and respect it not. I have known many respectable people, and wondered at them and their ways. Clerks, mostly—legal, government-official, or public-company clerks—philoprogenitive to an extent, with a leaning towards Dalston or Camden Town as a residence ; strange and fantastic as regards apparel ; people who look upon an oratorio at Exeter Hall as a recreation ; call actors “performers,” and ignore Tennyson. In their turn, I will say the respectables love not me nor my fellows. They cannot comprehend us ; and though the obnoxious Act of Parliament aforenamed has been repealed, and though they see us inhabiting good houses, paying rent, rates, and taxes, attending church, serving on juries and committees, and performing all proper acts of good citizenship, they still look upon us as beyond the pale of acquaintance and recognition. These are the middle classes, the suburbans, the Pancras-cum-Bloomsburys—as distinguished from the swells, the upper ten thousand, who adore us—and the fashionable moneyocracy, who follow their lead ; who think us so quaint, so curious ; who say we are such entertaining persons, so amusing, and with such a fund of humour ; and who, with all their adoration, talk, and recognition, have as much real feeling for us as they have for Mr. Gunter, who supplies the ices, or Mr. Edgington, who builds the extempore Turkish kiosk on the first landing-place.

And who are *we* of whom I am writing ? What people occupy this curiously anomalous position—this Mahomet’s coffin-like suspension between envy and scorn ? What is that queer world which I have undertaken to describe ? I will tell you. The subject of my essays are the amusing classes ; those who belong to none of the three recognised professions ; and who, without being sharpers or swindlers,

yet contrive to live “by their wits.” Such are the literary men, the newspaper-writers, the actors, singers, and musicians; the entertainment-givers, the lecturers, the artists in oil, in water-colour, and on wood—finally, my queer world is the *monde des artistes*.

A queer world indeed! A world of hard strivings, and, generally speaking, small results! In some degree, a hollow, shamming world—a world with a mask on—a mask bearing a pleasant expression and a fixed grin, behind which the face of the wearer is lengthy, pale, anxious, and careworn! A world the members of which have a somewhat difficult part to play; for you, my public, come to us for recreation or distraction; and we, who live to please, must please to live. We must never be ill, dull, or dispirited; we must leave our sick couches at the sound of the overture—put off our mourning garments and don our motley when we hear the tramp of the audience coming in.

With small means, and yet requiring some peculiar comforts, the denizens of this queer world have some difficulty in accommodating themselves with appropriate residences. The artist must have spacious rooms with a “north light,” at a rent to suit the exigencies of his income, and yet sufficiently near the great thoroughfares for the convenience of models and sitters; the musician must not be subjected to the resentment of soulless neighbours who object to the perpetual repetition of a symphony, rehearsed and re-rehearsed until perfection is acquired, or who are inimical to the pursuit of the vocal art under the most trying difficulties or at the latest hours; the actor must be near his theatre; the newspaper-writer near his office; the *littérateur’s* home must not be beyond the reach of the always worn and sleepy printer’s devil—and so it comes that this queer world takes possession of one special *locale*, and holds it for its own.

The *locale* is as queer as its inhabitants; a bygone

locale—a place that has been a quarter of the town once grand and fashionable, but now lodging-let and boarding-housed ; vast gloomy mansions, with treble windows and enormous doors—the area railings furnished with extinguishers, in which the Jeameses of the bygone generations buried their flaming torches after safely depositing their mistresses at Lady Bab's drum. Inside, the rooms are also vast and gloomy too, save those occupied by the artists, whose windows are generally carried up to the floor above ; the staircases are broad and capacious, as are the landings and the entrance-hall. Hotspur Street may be reckoned the head-quarters of the queer world ; and the houses in Hotspur Street are all of the pattern just described. The street itself combines all the requirements of its denizens : one turning takes you into Oxford Street, the other end leads into Tottenham Court Road—that thoroughfare where all the necessities of life are procurable at the lowest prices, and where the shops, relying on the dissipated manners of their customers, keep open until incredible hours. In the hot summer weather, when the cabbages lying exposed on Tottenham Court Road stalls are turned brown by the sun—when the gentleman with the Italian name gives up the chestnuts which he has vended during the winter, and produces particoloured slabs of damp and clinging nastiness which he calls “penny ices”—when the contents of butchers’-shops, always unpleasant to the eye, become equally offensive to the nose—then are the precincts of Hotspur Street invaded by foreign gentlemen of fantastic appearance, in wondrous coats, cloudy linen, dapper little boots, and trousers apparently manufactured of brown-paper—these are the *confrères* of many of the attic inhabitants, who are attached to the Opera-band and chorus—dark, sallow-faced men with shaved blue-beards and short-cropped hair, convenient for the wearing of wigs : then is a great Saturnalia carried on ; Alphonse and Max tear down the stairs, rush into the street,

and, seizing upon Jules and Heinrich, enarm them then and there, and rub beard to beard with frank sincerity and hearty welcome: then the thumping of pianos, the twanging of stringed and the blast of wind instruments are redoubled; while from the open attic windows float such clouds of smoke as almost to justify the apprehensions of nervous neighbours that the premises are on fire.

Foreigners, however, are not the only excitement in Hotspur Street ; for the carriages that discharge their living cargoes at Jack Belton's door, and crawl lazily up and down until they are signalled to return and "take up," are the envy of the neighbourhood, and attract an enormous audience of the infantile population.

Jack Belton lives at No. 136, the large house with the portico, and is now one of the first artists of the day —smiled on by the fairest of the aristocracy, courteously received by dukes and marquises, actually in favour with the Royal Academy, and not snubbed by the Hanging Committee ! Times, however, were not always so brilliant with him ; slowly, and step by step, has he advanced in his profession ; every round of the ladder has been fought for until his present position was attained. Jack's father was a merchant-prince—a Russell Square man—a person of fabulous wealth, who, like that noble monarch George the Second, "hated poetry and painting," and lived but for his money, his dinners, and his position in the City ; a fat, pompous, thick-headed man, with a red face, a loud voice, a portly presence, and overwhelming watch-chain ; a man before whom the bank-porters bowed their cocked-hats with awe, and at whose name the messengers of the Stock Exchange did obeisance out of sheer reverence ; a man with many services of plate—with a splendid library which he never entered—with a country-house, and pineries, and lakes, and preserves ; a man who looked down upon his son Jack (at the age of sixteen but a puny lad) with contempt,

and wondered “why the son of a British merchant should demean himself by messin’ with chalks and paints, like any poor strugglin’ artist !” When Jack was sixteen the crash came. Mr. Belton pleasantly over-speculated himself : shares that should have been at a premium were at a discount—a public company, which was to have made the fortunes of its directors and shareholders, suddenly burst up ; Bank-porters bowed their cocked-hats no longer—men on ‘Change gathered in knots, looked grave, and shook their heads ominously as they spoke of “Belton’s business.” If you were in Jack’s confidence now, he might perhaps tell you a touching story of those days—how, as he was about to mount his pony and canter away, followed by his groom in livery, his sister, one year older than himself, came out and whispered him—how the horses were sent away ; and the boy and girl went into the splendid library, where, for the first time, Jack heard the awful tidings that “Papa was ruined !” You would hear how these two brave hearts consulted and planned brave deeds—ay, and, young as they were, executed them ! How Jack tramped half over London with a lithographic stone under his arm, offering his drawings for sale ; how at last one spirited publisher was found who accepted them, paid the boy for his work, and brought it out in a handsome manner ; how the style found favour with the public ; how Jack received commissions from his publishing friend for an unlimited amount of work ; and how, when carpets were festooned from the windows of the Russell Square mansion, and posting-bills were placarded against the door, announcing, in the choicest language of the late eminent Mr. James Jobbings, that the elegant and distinguished furniture, the noble paintings, the rare wines, the fine collection of ancient and modern authors, etc., were for sale within, Jack piloted the delicate sister and broken-spirited old man through the crowd of carpet-capped salesmen and jabbering Jews, and conveyed them to a neat,

respectable lodging hired by him, and maintained for many years after by the products of his untiring industry. Were you in his confidence, I say, he might tell you somewhat of this story ; and now I will tell you more. I will tell you that, in the lapse of time, the old man died, blessing and reverencing the son he had once despised ; I will tell you that the delicate sister is now one of the sweetest young matrons in England, married to a literary man whose name is a household word in every place where great talents and pure thoughts are appreciated. I will tell you that, if I am not mistaken—and I've a keen eye for this sort of thing—this present summer will not pass away without our seeing Jack himself (let me be polite for once, and say Mr. Belton, R.A. !) united to a sister of his sister's husband—a girl fitted for him in every way. God bless you, Jack ! God bless you, noble mind and clever head ! After marriage you will quit our quarter and migrate to more fashionable regions. But we shall watch your career ; every succeeding triumph will be hailed with delight, and your name will always be mentioned with enthusiasm in the queer world which you once adorned.

Do you see that blear-eyed, wizen-faced, white-haired man, shambling up the sunny side of the street, and rubbing his short and dingy blue cloak against the area railings as he passes ? That is old Solfa, and old Solfa's cloak ! He is never seen without that cloak : in it he takes his walks abroad, in it he sits at home, and encircled in its scanty folds it is firmly believed he takes his rest. Jack Gabbler, who knows everything and everybody, or, at all events, who pretends to if he does not, says he called upon Solfa very early one morning ; that Solfa's voice answered him as from beneath distant bedclothes, and that on his demanding an interview, Solfa came out to him enveloped in his cloak, and apparently nothing else ! He is a very old man now, but in his day he was great. An admirable musician, a pleasant

singer, master of every instrument, and being neither too proud to accompany a song, nor too modest to sit in the middle of a crowded room and sing pretty little French *romans*, accompanying himself on a guitar slung round his neck by a broad blue ribbon, Solfa was a great acquisition in a country-house, and went into very excellent society. He did not wear the blue cloak then, as you would readily perceive in the portrait which hangs over his looking-glass, and which he always shows to every new friend. There he is gorgeous in a huge-collared coat, in pantaloons tied with strings at the ankles, in ribbed stockings and pumps. “*C'était dans les jours de ma première jeunesse !*” says the old man, pointing to it with a trembling hand, “bé—for I was old Solfa, as zey call me now.” And he will tell you a long maudlin story about his wife, whom he adored, “*Oh, Sophie ! comme je t'amais !*” and who is dead. I should, however, advise you not to believe this part of the narrative, as rumour whispers that he utterly neglected Sophie, that he was always out at parties, leaving his wife moping at home (quite like Tom Moore in a small way, isn't it ?), and it was firmly believed that he was in the habit of correcting her by personal chastisement. Now his day is over, his friends dead or grown very steady, and his place in society occupied by younger men. His voice is cracked ; and at an evening party a man with a guitar and blue ribbon would only be laughed at ; so Solfa has retired into private life, and given himself up entirely to what has long been his ruling passion, the desire for making money. He would go anywhere or do anything which would turn out remunerative ; he buys things at a wonderfully low rate, and sells them for large prices ; he can beat down the strongest-minded Jews, and vanquish them in their own exclusive territories, the private sales and auction-rooms of London. He attends the periodical auctions with the utmost regularity ; and I have seen him coming up Hotspur Street in the gloom of the evening with the scanty cloak extended to its utmost limits, to act as

a covering for a large pier-glass which he was carrying beneath it. When I first knew Solfa, he one day pulled out of his pocket a very pretty watch, a lady's watch, enamelled and set with diamonds. I was more foolish in those days, perhaps, than I am now ; and I thought of a young person whose birthday was close at hand, and whose bright eyes would look brighter still were I to present her with the watch as a *gage d'amitié* ! well, perhaps *d'amour* ! Solfa was, of course, disposed to sell it, and though he asked a high price, under such circumstances money is "no object," and the watch became mine. When the purchase was concluded and the money paid, Solfa said : "I vill gif you leetle advice ! Ze vatch is a goot vatch ; veer him two year, then sell him ! I have vore him two year myself, and I think four year more he be no good."

This is his policy, the true policy of the present day—buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market ; and by the exercise of much worldly wisdom and arithmetical shrewdness, he has collected together a large fortune. His rooms, two small attics, are crowded with clocks, pictures, statuettes, and objects of *virtu*, constantly changing, and all yielding a percentage. Some day he will be found dead in that back room. He has no relations, no friends ; but he tells everyone he has made a will, and he looks so benevolently at each of us as he says it, that I am sometimes disposed to think we have distant hopes of being down for a legacy, and that is why we stand his stories of bygone days with so much patience.

We have very few actors left in our queer world now, though at one time they used to abound there. But they have migrated to Brompton and Chelsea, where there is quite a histrionic colony ; and whence, if you lounge down Piccadilly at about six o'clock in the fine afternoons, you may see them hastening to their avocations in shoals—heavy tragedy and low comedy chatting together outside the omnibuses, while the heroines of tear-drawing melo-

drame and *piquante* farce come rattling up in broughams and cabs. These are great times for the gents ; they love to see an actor off the stage, and it is believed that many of them, if they could make the acquaintance of Mr. Paul Bedford, and hear him call them by their christian-names in his rolling voice, would die happy. When they see any theatrical person in the street, they watch their movements closely, and are much disappointed at not perceiving any eccentricity in their walk or manner, hoping that after a few steps the actor would invert himself, and proceed for the rest of his journey on his hands, or that upon calling a cab he would spring into it head-foremost, and be seen no more.

In Hotspur Street I think there is not a single actor left —for you can scarcely call Spouter an actor now. At one time they say he was wonderful in second-rate parts; and in the days of the Kembles and the elder Kean he used to be constantly engaged, playing what is technically called “youthful tragedy, *jeune-premier*, and genteel comedy,” such as Cassio, Mercutio, Orlando, Don Felix, etc. They say he was particularly handsome and *distingué*-looking ; and they tell me that marchionesses and duchesses were in love with him, and nightly appeared in certain seats when he acted. They tell me this, and I receive it as a legend. I do not think many ladies of title are nowadays in love with our theatrical young gentlemen. They say that Spouter’s appearance and manners so charmed, that the Prince Regent invited him to Carlton House, and would have proved an invaluable friend to him had his Royal Highness not soon discovered, what was really the fact, that, beyond a handsome person, Spouter had no charm ; that he was a dull, soulless person, who learnt his words by rote, and repeated them, with certain conventional gestures, without the slightest knowledge of their real signification.

But the “first gentleman in Europe,” with all his folly, was a much better judge of ability than half his subjects ; and by hundreds of families Spouter was still worshipped

and invited. There is a portrait of him by Clint still in the possession of the Roscius Club; he is standing as Mercutio, in the celebrated "Queen Mab" speech, and the animation of his handsome features is especially well rendered. This picture was engraved, and all the young ladies of thirty years ago had a print of Spouter hanging in their bedrooms; those young ladies are now middle-aged matrons; a new generation has arisen which knows not Spouter; and the hook in the wall on which Mercutio erst hung, is now occupied by a sweet portrait of the Rev. Cyprian Genuflex, ornamented with the autograph signature of the darling curate, and the date—"Eve of Saint Boanerges."

Yes, Spouter's day is over. He is an old man now, in a brown wig; but he doesn't remember the lapse of time, and so pads and paints, and tooths and calves himself, that at a distance he does not look above forty-five. He is slightly deaf, too; and so accustomed has he been to flattery, that, whenever a lady addresses him, and he has not exactly caught what she said, he imagines it must be a compliment, and bows his head, saying, in a deprecating manner: "Oh! you're very kind, but I am no longer young!"

He has long since retired from the stage, and gives lessons in elocution. Looking from my window on bright summer mornings, I often see his clients at Spouter's door; heavy, awkward country actors, who have received traditional accounts of Mercutio's polished elegance, and have come up for tuition; Belgravian curates in long black coats, high-buttoned waistcoats, and linen dog-collars in lieu of cravats. There is the sofa-pillow transformed into the dead body of Cæsar, and over it does Horace Mattins speak Antony's oration; there does Mr. Bellows, of the T. R., Stockton-upon-Tees, set forth that his name is Norval, and sneer at the bucolic disposition of his parent.

These are some of the characters in my queer world: the history of the others must be reserved for some future occasion

CHAPTER XXXIII.

GAZETTING EXTRAORDINARY.

QUIEN SABE? Who knows? is an exclamation constantly in the mouth of every Spaniard, from the hidalgo to the water-carrier. *Que sais-je?* What do I know? perpetually asks Michael de Montaigne in his Essays. When they prated of the universal knowledge of someone to Archdeacon Paley, the old theologian bade them ask their friend if he knew how oval frames were turned. We are told that the cobbler should stick to his last, and that, provided he is acquainted with all the appliances of his trade, the mysteries of under and double soling, welting, pressing, fronting, clumping, taking up, screw-pegging, and bevelling the edges, he need not bother himself about flints in the drift, or waste his midnight oil in endeavouring to find an antidote to disinfecting fluid. But suppose he does not know all about his own trade—suppose the cobbler has not got the length of his last properly in his mind—suppose there are combinations of cobbling of which he is ignorant—a style of boot-making of which he had never heard—what then? This is just where the shoe pinches the writer who has now the honour to address you. The desk is his lapstone, the pen his awl, the ink his thread, the paper his material. He calls himself a skilled workman, and as such he ought to know all the branches of journalism, the trade

to which he is affiliated. He thought he did know them all, in knowing the ordinary daily papers, the weekly press, the “organs” of various classes, the “sporting organ,” with its singular phraseology and recondite lore ; the illustrated papers, wherein are always to be found exactly the same crowds of blob-headed faceless people staring with the same interest at royal processions, railway accidents, volunteer reviews, or the laying of foundation-stones, and wherein, week after week, with singular pertinacity, are presented engravings of trowels used in the last-named operation, engravings of inkstands presented to mayors, and engravings of other deeply-interesting trophies. He knew that architects and builders, booksellers and publishers, had periodicals specially devoted to their interests, and well conducted ; and he once saw *The Grocer*, and learnt from its pages that there were groceries called mannagroup and melado, and cheeses known as Gouda, Kauter, and Edam, new milk. But it is only within the last few days that he has become acquainted with the existence of two publications of very peculiar qualities—organs steeped from the title to the imprint in matter relating to poverty and crime. They are both worth glancing through.

The first is owned by, edited by, and bought by, our—your—everybody’s—uncle. Here it is (London edition) price threepence, or ten shillings per annum, eight large quarto pages, *The Pawnbroker’s Gazette*. Not “News,” or “Journal,” or “Herald,” but “Gazette,” as if to pleasantly remind its readers of bankruptcies, and unredeemed pledges, and forced sales consequent thereupon. Printed and published in the highly legal and erst Insolvent Court locality of Serle’s Place, Lincoln’s Inn, this valuable organ has pursued the pawning tenor of its way for the last twenty-five years, gladdening the hearts of its subscribers by appearing with unfailing regularity once in every week. It bloomed into existence, therefore, concurrently with

Chartism and other national benefits ; perhaps dilated on the eternal fitness of pawnbrokers on the occasion of the Queen's marriage, the Duke of Wellington's funeral, and other great celebrations wherein portable property changed hands, and is now ably deprecating "the restrictions upon trade which are contained in the twenty-first section of the Pawnbroker's Act." We learn from the number before us that "recent events naturally attract attention" to these restrictions, and ignorantly wonder what these "recent events" can possibly be. Carefully perusing this leading article, we come upon what seems the self-evident proposition, that "pawnbroking is a delicate operation," and are at once plunged into a reverie on the delicacy of pawning. We, in our utter ignorance, read "pawnbroking" from the outside point of view. Irresolute pacings in front of the shop, mock interest in the articles for sale, affectedly careless swaggerings through the front or purchaser's door, and furtive dartings into the private entrance round the corner, are the only images the phrase "delicate operation" conjures up. What can you expect of a man who never heard of the baleful twenty-first section, and who had no notion of pawnbrokers save as stern appreciative beings, mysteriously blessed with an unlimited supply of ready-money, and entertaining, to a man, cynical doubts as to the value of jewellery, and an unpleasant distrustfulness as to the quality of gold ? But this "delicate operation" refers, not to the tendering, but to the acceptance of pledges, which, says the *Gazette*, "calls for great experience and knowledge of the world in those engaged in it."

We believe this so implicitly, that we find ourself sneering with the writer at "no person under the age of sixteen being permitted to receive pledges," and saying with him that it savours of "the burlesque conditions of the oath which our fathers were presumed to take at Highgate." By

this time we have lost all sympathy with pawners, and are so imbued with the spirit of the paper as to feel every inch a Pawnee. Adopting, as is our habit, the tone and opinions of the journal we are reading, we assert boldly that "the poor and ignorant are many of them most improvident in their habits;" we regret "it is impossible to repress this kind of improvidence by Act of Parliament;" we laugh with scorn at the absurdity of the supposition that "the pawnbroker has a natural bias towards the receipt of stolen goods;" and we say that it is annoying to the regular licensed trader "to see the well-intentioned efforts of the legislature only play into the hands of the dolly-shop keeper." We read the peroration of the article with a complacent feeling that it "settles" all profane people who would cast a doubt upon the divine right of pawnbroking; and so come triumphantly to the answers to correspondents. We are gratified to learn from the first of these that "in the event of any article pledged being found on redemption to have become damaged by rats and mice," we (regarded as a pawnbroker) are not liable to make good such damage, provided (and this is all-important) we "keep up such an efficient staff of cats as a prudent man would be bound to do under such circumstances." Before we have decided on the exact minimum number of those domestic animals consonant with prudence, we are plunged into another "answer," wherefrom we find that under certain circumstances (not named) "the magistrates have the power to order the delivery of the property;" and that we "can do nothing but submit until the pledger returns to England;" when, if he has sworn falsely, he may "be prosecuted for perjury." Turning in due course to the police intelligence, we find it has been carefully selected with an eye to the interests of the trade. Impudent robbery of coats from a pawnbroker's; a daring fellow who has broken a pawnbroker's window; a pawnbroker charged with dealing in

plate without a license; and a pawnbroker as witness against a prisoner—are the principal cases reported; they curiously serve to show the various phases of life permeated by the golden balls.

The report of the monthly meeting of the committee of “The Metropolitan Pawnbrokers’ Protection Society” is also very agreeable reading, though we regret to find that the “effort to have an annual dinner this year was unsuccessful,” and that out of one hundred and seventy-three invitations issued, each requesting the courtesy of a reply, only twenty-one had met with any response.” This regret is soon dissipated, however, in the vast interest inspired by the subjects brought before the committee. That the world is in a conspiracy against pawnbrokers, and that the most cautious conduct and the most complete organisation are necessary, is obvious from this record. A member of the society applies for assistance and advice, under the trying circumstance of an owner demanding property stolen from him, and pledged. Advice promptly given, assistance refused. Solicitor to society unfeelingly remarks there can be no doubt that the pawnbroker must give up the property, if it is identified; committee concur in his opinion. Committee return a similar answer to an application from a member for the means of defence (already refused by “the district committee”) in connection with some stolen and pledged silk; and justify their refusal by the remark that “no successful resistance can possibly be made.” Discussion on a felonious and absconding pawnbroker’s assistant; on a pawnbroker who stopped goods, offered under suspicious circumstances; on a case wherein property had been pledged by a wife, and redeemed by a husband (on a legal declaration that the ticket was lost), whereupon husband and wife adjourn to the Divorce Court, and wife’s solicitor produces ticket, and claims the pledged property on her behalf; upon “duffing” jewellery made specially

to swindle the trade ; and other kindred topics—prove that the sweet little cherubs who sit in committee at Radley's Hotel keep watch over the life and interests of every poor Jack whose profession is pawnbroking, and who falls among thieves, or otherwise knows trouble. These cherubs must not be confounded with the "Assistant Pawnbrokers' Benevolent Society," which is much agitated on "Mr. Floodgate's case," and a report of whose meeting is on the next page.

Not without difficulty, for the particulars are given in former numbers of the *Gazette*, which we have not seen, do we make out that Mr. Floodgate is a pawnbroker's shopman, who is being prosecuted for an alleged breach of the law relating to the purchase of precious metals. The Assistants' Society has met to discuss the propriety of furnishing him with the means of defence, and though some of its members express a strong opinion that it is the duty of "a master to defend his young man," still a committee is appointed to collect subscriptions on Mr. Floodgate's behalf. The solicitor informs us that "a defence may be conducted for twenty pounds, twenty-five pounds, thirty pounds, or, in fact, for *any amount*, according to the talent which might be retained," and hints that "to defend this case in a style commensurate with the prosecution, we may be put to an expense of eighty or even one hundred pounds."

We feel this to be a good round sum, but preferring it to the vague "any amount" previously mentioned, we separate, determined that our fellow-assistant shall be properly represented on the day of trial. That day of trial is now past ; let us hope, therefore, that our efforts were not unavailing, and that Mr. Floodgate is (if wrongfully charged) at this moment making out duplicates, and rejoicing in the friendly protection afforded him by the society. Passing by the literature of the *Gazette*, we come

to the advertising pages. Here we have more proof of the usefulness of the paper, by finding every conceivable pawnbroking want appealed to. We can have for one shilling, post-free, "A table of the rates of profits allowed to be taken by pawnbrokers on intermediate sums;" for five shillings, "A statistical account of the operations in the Monts de Piété of France, Belgium, and Ireland, and of pawnbroking in England, with suggestions for its improvement."

If we be of an antiquarian turn, a barrister-at-law has prepared for us *The Law of Pawns*: which is not a work on chess, but a collection of adjudged cases, together with some historical account of the system of lending money on pawns, as practised by tradesmen, companies, and governments. Again, if we be a buyer, as well as a mortgagee, of miscellaneous property, three firms of auctioneers announce sales of unredeemed pledges on every day in the ensuing week. Pawnbroking businesses to be disposed of; pawnbroking tickets for the "sale trade," boldly written, at from ninepence the gross;" pawnbroking duplicate tickets, of "a firmness and substance hitherto unsurpassed," numbered consecutively from one to ten thousand, no two tickets in the same month to bear a similar number, and no two tickets to be alike for two years; pawnbrokers' assistants who want places; and pawnbrokers who want assistants—are all headings to the advertisements. Youths, sharp active youths, young men, respectable young men, men of experience, men of from six to seventeen years' experience in the taking of pledges, countermen, salesmen innumerable, are open to engagements. The respectable young men mostly aspire to "a situation as third," whatever that may be; the youths are able to write tickets as well as serve at the counter; while the salesmen and men of experience can, as a rule, "mark for the window," and take the management in the absence of the principal.

Of the other journal we had indirectly heard. For in the *Newgate Calendar* are there not constant references to the Bow-Street Runners' organ, the *Hue and Cry*? The Bow-Street Runners are gone ; it is years since we read the *Newgate Calendar* ; and now we find that the *Hue and Cry* has given up that thrilling title, and calls itself the *Police Gazette*.

It is published by authority, and is of similar size and shape to the journal just described. It is, however, very different in style and tone, presenting neither leading article, answers to correspondents, reports of public meetings, or advertisements proper. We say advertisements proper, because the whole paper is filled with advertisements of a kind, but they are inserted free of charge, and were never liable to duty. The "wants," which occupy its columns, are wants of criminals still at large. The paper before us is thus subdivided : Four pages are taken up with "Informations," and four with the names of deserters from her Majesty's service. The "Informations" are subdivided into "Murder and Maliciously Wounding;" "Robbery and Larceny from the Person;" "Burglary and Housebreaking;" "Horse and Cattle Stealing;" "Larceny and Embezzlement;" "Frauds and Aggravated Misdemeanours;" "Miscellaneous;" "Property Stolen;" and "Property Found by Police Officers" (on the persons of prisoners and elsewhere). The style of this journal is of the closest, for it merely gives, as it professes, "*the substance* of all informations received in cases of felony, and of misdemeanours of an aggravated nature, and against receivers of stolen goods, reputed thieves and offenders escaped from custody, with the time, the place, and the circumstance of the offence. The names of persons charged with offences, who are known, but not in custody, and a description of those who are not known, their appearance, dress, and other marks of identity. The names of accomplices and accessories, with

every particular which may lead to their apprehension. A description, as accurate as possible, of property that has been stolen, and a minute description of stolen horses, for the purpose of tracing and recovering them." The facility of mental metempsychosis which made us a pawnbroker just now, converts us into a police-constable while reading this statement of the scope and bearing of the *Police Gazette*. We open it at our provincial station-house, and, conning over the descriptions to see whether any of them apply to the two suspicious-looking tramps we saw lurking about the manor-house yesterday when we were on duty, fail in this ; but in one of the advertisements we recognise the plausible talkative man we met at the cross-roads on Sunday, who seemed, for all his talkativeness, to shun our eye, and whom we heard of afterwards as inquiring the way to the next town. We report our discovery, a message is sent to the police-superintendent of that town, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that the Blucher boots with a small hole in one toe will shortly carry their owner into Stamford jail. The extreme particularity of these descriptive "informations" is carried down to scars on the thumb, to peculiar modes of pressing the lips when speaking, to the accent of the voice, and to the expression of the eye. The dress in which "wanted" persons were last seen, down to the patches on their trousers, the cut and material of their coats, the amount of wear had out of their hats and boots, the size of the plaits in their shirts, and the colour of their stockings, is faithfully reproduced ; and we rise from the perusal of this portion of the news from Bow Street convinced that we shall soon hear of a large proportion of the one hundred and ten "informations" it contains resulting in the apprehension of the persons described. Subsequently we turn to the list of deserters, the reward for whose apprehension has since 1857 been twenty shillings instead of ten. We carefully note the tabulated columns,

headed respectively, name, number of regiment, corps, where born, trade, age, size, hair, eyes, face, coat, trousers, date of desertion, marks, and remarks. Upwards of a thousand deserters from the militia and line are here described ; the sea-service, including the marines, does not furnish a fourth of that number.

Instructed and edified, we put aside our newly-discovered periodicals, with an inaudibly-expressed hope that our distinguished name may never figure in the columns of either.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

So Earl Russell called it in my passport—travelling “on the public service,” nothing definite, nothing more. I had my instructions, of course, but they were, as they will remain, private. I had no uniform, like a courier, no sheep-skin bag of documents, no despatch-box, nothing distinctive and immediately recognisable, like a Queen’s messenger. On the public service I was to travel as one of the public, quietly making such inquiries as had been suggested to me, and quietly noting down the replies ; but I was in no wise to give clue to my business, was not to produce my passport until it was asked for, and was to enter into no particulars as to the public service on which I was accredited. I had one consolation—that I afforded subject for an enormous amount of jesting on the part of those friends who knew that my mission lay in Hamburg, at that time the head-quarters of the German army marching on to Schleswig Holstein. It was a part of the admirable humour of those wags to assume a belief in the premature closing of my earthly career, to take longing, lingering farewells of me under the assumption that I should be taken for a spy, and either shot on the spot, after a drum-head court-martial, or immured for life in a Prussian fortress. I was christened “Major André.” I was begged to read an account of the

captivity at Verdun. One would gravely affirm that he had heard hanging was not really painful ; another would advise me not to submit to the degradation of a handkerchief over my eyes, but to glare defiantly at the shooting-party ; a third hoped I had a strong pocket-knife, because "people always bought those queer little things that the prisoners carved out of wood." I bore their sallies like a hero, and started by the night-mail to Dover "on the public service."

Although the South-Eastern Railway has done its best to whirl me to that never-somnolent town, and although the Belgian mail-packet, advantaged by a splendid night, a favouring breeze, and a placid sea, has conveyed me thence to Ostend in very little more than four hours, I find, on disembarking at half-past three A.M., that our haste has been in vain, for the train does not start until after seven, and I have nearly four hours to get through. I am not prepared to say at what town in Europe I should prefer spending these four hours on a winter's night, but I am prepared to declare that certainly Ostend should not have my suffrages. Had it been summer, I could have had some supper at one of the numerous quay-side restaurants, and then strolled round the town ; or I could have walked on the Digue, or examined the Phare, or bathed in the sea ; but in January the quay-side restaurants are shut, and none of the other diversions are tempting. Nothing suggests itself but bed ; so, mindful of old recollections, I determine to go to the Hôtel d'Allemagne, and, waving off touters, who, even at this dead hour of the night and season of the year, are vociferously to the fore, I stow myself into a one-horse omnibus, and mention my intended destination. The conductor of this omnibus suggests to me a reconsideration of my determination. That he should say anything against the Hôtel d'Allemagne, far be it ! But he knows a better ; one which, if he may use an English word, is bien comfortablement, one which is close at hand, and where mademois-

selle (the other occupant of the omnibus) is about to descend. Will I not? No, I won't! The Hôtel d'Allemagne or nothing; and I pity mademoiselle, who descends at a not very attractive-looking porte-cochère, as I think of Raymond and Agnes, and Mr. Wilkie Collins's terribly strange bed, and many other unpleasant nights. But arriving at the Hôtel d'Allemagne, we find it fast closed, and all ringing and shouting are powerless to wake the inhabitants; so, much humiliated and crestfallen, I give in, and allow myself to be reconveyed to the *bien comfortablement*.

It is warm at the *bien comfortablement*, which is a great point on a bitter night; the stove is alight, the moderator-lamp shines brightly on the snowy tablecloth, and mademoiselle, who was deposited by the omnibus on its first journey, and who turns out to be a "young person in service," is talking unaspirated English to a big man, who came over in the fore-part of the steamer, and who is drinking hot brandy-and-water at a great rate. My hoarse friend, who has given up the omnibus, here puts in a spectral appearance at the door, and beseeches me to go to bed, promising to call me in the morning; so, dazed and tired, to bed I go; and as I creep between the coarse sheets, and rebound on the spring mattress, and see the foreign furniture, and smell the foreign smell, and vainly endeavour to cover myself with the foreign bed-clothes, I bethink me of the time when I was a tall slip of a boy, eighteen years ago, and when, on my way to a German university, I passed my first night in foreign parts in this same city of Ostend. And so, lulled partly by these reflections, partly by the monotonous crooning of the voices of the young person in service and the brandy-drinker in the next room, I fell asleep.

"'Sieu! 'sieu! cinq heures et d'mi, m'sieu." That recalled me to my senses, and I damped myself with the

napkin, and placed as much of my nose and chin as it would contain into the pie-dish, and dressed myself, and arrived in the salon just as the breakfast I had ordered before I went to bed was brought in by the waiter.

Princes, fools, and Englishmen travel in the first-class carriages, says the German proverb : I know I am not a prince, but I am an Englishman, therefore one need not enter upon the other question, I think, as I take my first-class ticket. I am travelling “on the public service” now, so I ride in the first-class ; on previous occasions I have ridden in the fourth-class, with fishwomen carrying strong-smelling baskets of Ostend produce into the inland regions, and blue-bloused peasants in large-peaked caps, with all of whom I have held converse in the Flemish language—which I did not understand, but in which I made excellent progress by speaking a mixture of English and German with a Dutch accent. Now I sit in the first-class. I am certain there are no other Englishmen in the train, and I suppose there are no princes, and no fools, at such an early hour, for I am solitary and silent. On, past Jabbeke and Bloemendael, jolly little neighbouring villages ; on, through the flat well-cultivated Belgian country ; on, past those dreary old châteaux, with the gabled roofs, standing far back, and looking so grim and desolate ; on, past the white-faced little towns, through the high street of which our train tears, giving us passing glimpses of close-capped children screaming at the wooden bar which prevents them from hurling themselves on the line ; on, until with a whistle and a shriek, we dash into Ghent, and pull up steaming beside the platform. Only one change at the Ghent station—no Englishman ; no bundle of railway rugs, umbrella and sticks, waterproof coat, camp-stool, and red-faced Murray, shining like a star in the midst of them ; no bowing commissionnaire conducting milor to his carriage ; priests in big shovel-hats ; fat-faced Flemish maidens ; Ghent burghers,

looking particularly unlike one's idea of Philip van Artevelde; porters, idlers, everything as usual, except the English travellers. So at Malines, where, as usual, we stop for half an hour's refreshment, I perceive the lack of English travellers; the buvette, where assemble the choice spirits of the third and fourth classes, is filled with roysterers drinking that mahogany-coloured beer with a white woolly froth, which is at once so nasty and so reminiscent of a pantomime beverage; but the first-class restaurant (so red-velvety, so gilded and looking-glassed, and artificial-flowered, and marble-tabled) has only three visitors: a Belgian officer in a gray overcoat, bright blue trousers and gilt spurs; a fat German, perpetually wetting the point of the pencil with which he is making notes; and myself. So throughout the journey.

Passing Liège, the sun burst out, and the deep red cuttings, and the foaming waterfalls, and babbling rivulets, and bright green growth of what Thomas Hood aptly called the "lovely environs" of that grim smoke-begrimed city, glowed in his rays. Indeed, the weather continued so bright and genial, that when we ran into Cologne, at half-past four, I could scarcely believe it was mid-winter. But when I stood, portmanteau in hand, at the railway-station, I soon realised the fact! In the touring season the yard is filled with cabs and omnibuses; now, there are three wretched droschkies, driverless and badly horsed; then, you have to fight your way through a shrieking crowd of touters, eager to bear you off to see the Dom, the shrine of the three kings, and the bones of St. Ursula's twelve thousand virgins; now, a solitary man, hinting at no sight to be seen, offers to carry my baggage to an inn. But I leave my traps at the station, and having two hours to pass before the starting of the train, I walk through the town, and find it indeed deserted. The big Rhine-bordering hotels are closed, half the Jean Marie Farinas have shut up their eau-de-cologne shops, while the

other two hundred and fifty seem thoroughly unexpectant of custom : the Wechsel Comptoir (or money-changers), whose ideas as to the current value of a sovereign are very vacillating, now have closed their shutters, and the itinerant photograph-sellers have fled. So I skulk back to the station, and there get a portion of a tough hare, and some red cabbage, and some kraut and potato salad, drink a bottle of Rüdesheimer, and throw myself into the train and prepare for a night's rest.

I get it, with the exception of three rapid exits for refreshment purposes, at Minden, Hanover, and Lehrte. I sleep steadily on until half-past seven A.M., when we arrive at Harburg, our terminal station. Hamburg lies on the other side of the Elbe, and the passage of the river is made in summer by a steamboat ; but now the Elbe is frozen, and the crossing is long and difficult. As I am getting my portmanteau, I see a good-looking fresh-coloured boy in a huge fur cap, standing on the box of a droschky in the courtyard; he motions to me inquiringly ; I respond, and the next minute he has rushed up, has collared my portmanteau, has pushed me into his carriage, and is standing upon the box, whooshing and holloaing to his two mettlesome little steeds. Besides his fur cap, he wears a short sheepskin jacket with the collar turned up round his face, thick breeches, and well-greased boots reaching to his knees. He has a large pair of fur gloves too, and a long whip, and a short cigar, and a great flow of animal spirits, which impels him jocosely to lay the whip across everybody he meets : shivering peasants with yokes carrying red pails, solemn douaniers, pompous post-couriers, sturdy farmers, fat burghers, all with their heads buried in their coat-collars. In five minutes we arrive at the banks of the Elbe, where we have to wait a quarter of an hour until the steam-ferry is ready to receive us. The scene is desolate enough ; the ice has begun to break up, but as yet has "given" but little ; a bitter north-east wind

skins the thin bald dreary landscape, flat and treeless ; and the horses attached to the various carriages shiver and rattle their harness. The peasants have put off their yokes, and stamp up and down beside their red pails ; the douaniers scowl over their pipes through the windows of the little toll-house ; the post-courier slips on the frozen road and falls headlong, coming up again with a comic expression of ruffled dignity and a mouth full of strange oaths ; and nobody seems happy save my fur-capped droschky boy, who, by dodging and whipping, has edged his carriage into the foremost rank. Then a shout announces that the steam-ferry is ready, and with heavy jolts and bumps we rumble on to it, carriages, horsemen, peasants, all closely packed together, with some twenty men in the bows armed with long iron-tipped poles to break up the solid, and push off the floating, ice. Steam is up, the fat little funnel throws out angry snorts, and we are off ; but after two minutes come upon a solid mass of ice which defies our charge, and defies, too, all the prods of the pole-bearers : so we have to back and steer into another channel, through which, by dint of pushing off the floating icebergs, and after many weary stoppages, we arrive at the other side. Then down a long, long chaussée, with never-ending poplars on either side, bounded by a broad arm of the Elbe, so thoroughly frozen that we drive bodily over the ice, with no other difficulty than the uncertain foothold of the horses ; then another chaussée, straggling outskirts of a town, wooden bridges over canals, where broad-bottomed boats lay, like the larks and leverets in the pie immortalised by Tennyson, “embedded and enjellied ;” then through a handsome faubourg, along a broad road skirting an enormous sheet of water and bordered by handsome houses ; and then pulled short up by the door of Streit’s hotel.

Very good is Streit, very handsome is his house, and very excellent is his accommodation, although by reason of my becoming tenant of the only disengaged room in the

hotel, I am mounted up very high, and my chamber has a dreary look-out into a back courtyard or flowerless garden. For Streit is full. At Streit's door I noticed two sentinels on guard, and in Streit's first floor are reposing princes of the land, who are thus guarded, and noble officers, the princes' staff. His Royal Highness of Prussia is *chez* Streit, and smaller Transparencies are billeted about in other mansions of this noble street, which is called the Jungfern-stieg. A very short acquaintance with Streit proves to me that his visitors are principally military; lumbering men with clinking spurs, and huge overcoats, and sweeping moustaches, brush by me in the passages; and I am continually tumbling over the regular soldier-servant, he of the short hair, stiff gait, and ears sticking out on the side of his head like the handles of a jug. I am disposed to believe that Streit imagines I too am military, when he hands me a letter from high authority which has been waiting my arrival, and which bears an enormous seal with the impression of the town arms, and has a strictly official and somewhat military appearance. Streit, I think, recognises the style of the address, but little wots Streit of the contents of this document, which enjoins me to return to England so soon as my necessary rest is accomplished. In his happy ignorance, and doubtless thinking that he has me his customer for days, Streit suggests my being tired and going to bed. But—though I don't confide this to Streit—I have only one day in which to see Hamburg, so I scorn his suggestion, and order breakfast. After a splendid bath—Streit has a very good bath in his house—I descend, find an oasis of cups and plates in a desert of tablecloth (laid for the table d'hôte breakfast), and start out to explore.

The enormous lake in front of me is the Alster Bassin, and no doubt in summer, when it is the grand resort of the Hamburgers, who, making up pleasant parties, float over its waters in painted boats, or booze and smoke in pavilion

cafés on its banks, it is a delightful place. Now, however, it is one vast sheet of ice, on which the thaw is just beginning to take effect, for in the distance is seen a line of men, half-a-dozen paces apart, extending from shore to shore, busily engaged in breaking holes in the ice to admit the air, and so tend to its more speedy dissolution. In the comely gardens fringing the lake I find nurse-girls and their charges, of course attendant soldiers, old gentlemen evidently bent on "constitutionals," priests with bent heads hurrying to the service, the bells inviting to which are now resonant, and little children scampering about—not unlike a foreign edition of St. James's Park, barring the ducks. Between the two Alster Bassins, the greater and the less, I cross over a barren strip of land, where there is a lock and a big windmill, brown and skeletony, and reminding one of the background of a sketch by Ostade ; and on the other side I find a high road, and on the high road I find two horses, and on the horses I find two Austrian officers coming very much to grief, partly on account of the slippery state of the roads, and partly on account of their not having yet acquired the rudiments of equitation ; for I take it that to pull a horse's nose on a level with his eye by the aid of a very sharp curb, and then to kick him in the flank with sharp-rowelled spurs, clutching meanwhile by anything permanent, is not the best way to keep a horse on his legs. Then across the Jungfernstieg into the shop-streets, where there is plate-glass, and gilding, and decoration, and lavish expenditure on every side. To eat seems the great end of the Hamburger's life—to eat and so to enjoy. Not only are there large hotels, restaurants, conditorei or pastrycooks, and fruiterers in every street, but at every dozen doors you find a board announcing that in the basement, below the level of the pavement, is an oyster-cellar. *Austern und Frühstück*, Oysters and Breakfast, that is the hospitable announcement of the signboard, and there do the fast young merchants :

congregate before they arrive at their counting-houses, and plunge so deeply into the many-lined, thinly-written, thin rustling leaves of letter-paper, all relating to that “first of exchange.” These oyster-cellars are cool yet snug resorts, suggestive of pleasant and soothing alkaline waters, succulent bivalves, appetising anchovies and devilled biscuits ; for your Hamburger has anything but poor brains for drinking, and could give your swag-bellied Hollander, and the rest of Cassio’s friends, a long start and catch him easily. Likewise, as a new feature, do I notice at the doors of the restaurants, venison : not in its prepared and floured state —as with us—but in its natural state, skin on, horns, hoofs, severed jugular and all.

High change in Hamburg is at one o’clock. As it is rapidly approaching that hour, I make my way towards the Börse, and enter the building as it is beginning to fill. A handsome edifice this, with a large spiral hall in the centre, surrounded by a colonnade. Upstairs all sorts of little rooms, with names on the doors, merchants’ offices like our London pattern at Lloyd’s, and a big room, empty and locked, which I am told is the seat of the Chamber of Commerce. From below comes a roar of voices, and, looking down, I see the Hamburg merchants literally “at it.” There they are, Hamburgers proper, rotund of body, heavy of jowl, fishy of eye, stubbly of hair, bushy of beard, thumb-beringed and hands-begrimed, listening and grunting ; young Hamburg, blotchy, sodden, watery-eyed, strongly reminiscent of “last night,” stung into business for business sake, and for the sake of making more money for the encouragement of Veuve Clicquot, and Mumm, and Roederer, and Heidzecker, and other compounders of Sillery Sec and Pommery Greno ; old Jewry, gaberdined to the heels in fur, with cotton wool in its ears, screaming, yelling, checking off numbers in its interlocutor’s face with skinny yellow fingers ; young Jewry, with an avalanche of black satin

round its throat, and a big brilliant diamond therein, cool, calm, specious, and a trifle oleaginous; middle-aged France, heaving in the waistband which props its rotund stomach under its double-chin, with scarcely any face to be seen between the rim of its fore and aft hat and the points of its gummed moustache; here and there an Englishman, chimney-pot-hatted, solemn and awfully respectable; little olive-skinned Greeks, Russians in sable, and two Parsees in brown-paper head-dresses. But the noise! It floods you, drenches you, soaks you through and through.

When I leave the Exchange it is past two o'clock, which I am glad of; but it is beginning to rain, which I am sorry for; Streit's table-d'hôte does not take place until four, and I must fain walk about, dreading the thoughts of my dreary bedroom looking on the back-yard. So I walk about, and look at the church of St. Nicholas, which is one of the best Gothic triumphs of our own great architect, Mr. Gilbert Scott, and I bend my neck very far back indeed endeavouring to see the spire of St. Michael's; and I visit the Rathhaus and am not impressed thereby, and I inspect the promenading female beauty with the same result: for the Hamburg females are neither better nor worse looking than the majority of their German sisters, and have the coarse hair, and the dull thick skins, and the coarse hands, and the elephantine ankles, for which your Deutsches Mädchen is renowned. They seem to find favour though in the eyes of the Prussian and Austrian officers, who are everywhere, and who ogle them in the true military manner; but the maidens do not respond, and only halt in their walk to contemplate occasional regiments marching by, with the invariable accompaniment of vagabond boys and men. But the rain now comes down so smartly that I can walk about uncovered no longer, and am making my way to Streit's, when out of the Jungfernstieg I turn into an arcade, full of such shops as in such places are generally to be found, and

here I while away my time. Jewellers first: I do not care to stare in at jewellers' windows in England; I seem to myself like a hungry urchin at a pastrycook's longing after the tarts; but that rule does not hold here, and so I stare my fill, noticing all the curly snakes with ruby eyes and turquoise tails, the rings and pins, the hair-brooches (the Germans are tremendous at these, and there were shoals of those very gummy wavy hair willow-trees bent over little black tombs, with the gilt wire adjustment plainly visible), the thin little French watches, the fat German turnips, the montres Chinoises (Chinese watches made in Geneva) with one long thin hand perpetually turning round, and rendering hopeless any attempt to tell the time; the earrings, the enormous gold skewers, arrows, hoops, arcs, shells, and knobs for the hair. Printsellers: the place of honour occupied by the late Mr. Luard's pictures of "Nearing Home" and the "Welcome Arrival," and Mr. Brooks's pretty sentimentalisms of empty cradles and watching wives; close by these, and in excellent keeping, a French artist's notion of the English in Paris; English gentleman in a suit of whity-brown paper, green plaid cloth tops to his boots, a pointed moustache, and a very fluffy hat (how they *do* catch our peculiarities in dress, don't they!), saying to a lady, lovely, but perhaps a trifle free: "Voulez accepter le cœur de *moi*?" in itself an excellent joke; many pictures of encounters between the Prussians and the Danes in 1848, in which the latter are always getting the worst of it, and a notable print, "Seeschlacht bei Eckendorf" (Sea-fight at Eckendorf), which sea-fight apparently consists of a Danish ship running aground, and the Germans running away. Then, a bookseller's; covered all over with their little copies of *Der Londoner Vertrag* ("The London Treaty" of 1852), with numerous French and German books, and some gaudy-coloured English works, one of which I am inclined to think by its title, *Daddy Goriot, or Unrequited Affection*,

cannot be entirely original, but may have some connection with a French gentleman, one Honoré de Balzac, deceased. Then a photographer's ; where I am refreshed at finding what I, of course, have never seen in my own land—carte-de-visite portraits of the Prince and Princess of Wales, also of Herr von Bismarck, the great Prussian firebrand, also of Fräulein Delia and Fräulein Lucca, great operatic stars, in all kinds of costume ; also the portrait of a gentleman, with particoloured cheeks, a cock's-comb head-dress and fantastic dress, with a legend underneath, stating it to be the effigy of "Herr Price, Clown, Circus Renz."

A lengthened tour of inspection of this arcade, and a chat with the tobacconist, of whom I buy some cigars, brings me close to four o'clock, when Streit rings his bell for table-d'hôte, and I find myself one of half-a-dozen civilians, all the rest of the guests being Austrian and Prussian officers. When they find I am a foreigner (they think I am a Russian), these gentlemen are very polite, including me in their conversation, clinking glasses with me, etc., while they scowl upon the civilians of their own country, and take no notice of them. The conversation turns upon the part played by England in this war, and I have the satisfaction of hearing my country and its ministers very roundly abused : so roundly, that at length I declare my nationality, and receive all sorts of apologies from my friends, who deprecate any idea of personality, but who still decry our English policy, and who tell me that the unpopularity of England throughout Germany is terrible. In due course after which I take my candle and go to bed, having to be up at day-break, to start once more on the public service.

CHAPTER XXXV

ASSAULT AND BATTERY.

“ Ha, ha !” said he, with a sardonic laugh.

“ What do you mean ?” I asked, indignantly.

“ Ha, ha !” repeated he, more sardonically than before ; “ it’s a hoax ; ” and then he roared with delight. “ He ” was the booking-clerk at the Faversham railway-station ; “ I ” was a passenger just alighted, and inquiring whether there would be any special return trains to London ; and “ it ” was a paragraph about a night-attack by volunteers, which had appeared in the newspapers.

Now, though a hoax in itself is a most delightful thing, requiring great subtlety of wit to invent, and great delicacy of humour to carry through, still when, after travelling more than fifty miles, at great trouble and inconvenience, for a special object, you find you have mistaken an asinine bray for the genuine bugle-call, you are apt to be annoyed. So I was beginning to wax very wroth, and to feel anything but pleasantly disposed towards Faversham, its volunteers, local population, railway, and belongings in general, when I was accosted by the station-master, from whom I learned that, though the numbers engaged would not be so large as had been stated in the newspaper paragraph, the night-attack would certainly be made ; that from the condition and drill of the men the operation would probably be very creditably

carried out ; and that, though there were no special return trains to London—indeed, I seemed to be the only stranger in the place—there was a capital hotel, where I should be taken excellent care of.

I found the hotel, forming one side of the queer little market-square, and immediately confronting the lopsided little town-hall, with its big-faced clock and its supporting pillars forming a little arcade, in which, probably, the merchants of Faversham most do congregate. I found the landlord astonished at the idea of a stranger coming so far to see so little, but, undoubtedly, delighted at the chance of driving me in an open trap to the scene of action, and of beholding the military display. I ordered my dinner, and I set out to do Faversham. Easily done. Such quaint old-fashioned, gable-ended houses, with all their woodwork newly grained, with plate-glass substituted for the old diamond panes, with the date of erection, in many cases, neatly picked out as something to be proud of ; and with a perpetual current of business pouring into them, bespeaking trade and prosperity ; such clean broad trimly-kept streets, stretching here away into a pleasant country, there away to new red-brick buildings, suggestive of benevolent townsfolk and heavy legacies ; such a charming old church, with a singular spire springing from a curious arch ; such a picturesque schoolhouse close by, with such a ringing, fresh, girlish voice within, heard through the open window singing—oh, so sweetly !—the Evening Hymn ; such a capital range of red-brick houses, with stone mullions and copings judiciously introduced, with bay windows thrown out here, and twisted chimneys put on there, and with, in the middle, a large, handsome, evidently public building, with big doors and those fine old mediæval hinges, which make such a show, but which are not particularly useful. Of a passing rustic, or rather semi-rustic, an agricultural labourer with a maritime flavour, I asked what

that (pointing to it) was. The person looked at me for a moment seriously, then grinned, and said, "Faversham." "Of course, I know; but *that?*" pointing again. A longer stare; then "Houses" was the reply. "Of course, but *that?*" with an unmistakable forefinger. "A-ah!"—long drawn-out sigh of relief—"Institoot." The Albert Institute, well endowed, well supported, well attended, well conducted. Faversham's tribute to the memory of the Prince Consort, and a very sensible tribute too.

Dinner despatched, I found the landlord awaiting me in an open phaeton, and away we sped to the scene of the operations, some four miles distant. Our passage through the streets was impeded by the streams of people all pouring out in the one direction, old and young, women and children, all full of spirits. Sitting on the box by the landlord, I had been wondering at the perpetual shouts of laughter we occasioned, at the never-failing roar of delight with which our appearance—like that of some popular actor—was greeted, and I was about to ask my companion for an explanation, when, turning round for an instant, I saw a shock-headed ragged man solemnly trotting by the side of our trap, to which he was holding with one hand. "Who's your friend?" I asked the landlord. "Oh!" said he without turning, "'tis only Buzzy Billy!" Being to my shame ignorant of this celebrity, I was compelled to press the question further, and then learnt that Buzzy Billy was the "softy," the omadhaun, in plain English the idiot, of the town, who, like most idiots, had a certain amount of nous, which fitted him for work which no one else cared to do, and that he was attached as our retainer to hold the horse and look after the trap while we were farther afield, with the certainty that no amount of excitement could beguile him from his duty. Which result, on such an occasion, could not have been predicated of any other male in Faversham. As running footman Buzzy Billy

discharged his duties well, distributing slaps of the head among the boys with great impartiality, with a hand about the size and colour of a shoulder of mutton, invariably meeting all suggestions of a “lift” with the sarcastic remark, “Get ‘long wi’ ‘ee ! They wouldn’t let *me* ride, much less such as you !”

As we rode along, I learned from the landlord that the night’s proceedings had been originated by a gentleman, the proprietor of extensive powder-mills in the neighbourhood, who, at his own cost, had raised among his own workmen two batteries of artillery, numbering one hundred and twenty men, who are provided by him with uniform and accoutrements, whose expenses are paid, and from whose wages he never makes any deduction when drills, gun-practice, and military evolutions call them from their regular work. These artillerymen, constituting the Second Kent Artillery Volunteers, were reckoned among the crack corps of the county ; and of this I had an opportunity presently of judging, as we drove past the grounds of their founder, who is also their major, where they were drawn up in line—as well-built, trim, well-equipped a body of men as one could wish to see. These were the repelling force ; the attacking body, consisting of the Sheerness Dockyard Battalion, had preceded us, and we could occasionally catch the refrain of a tune played by their band far ahead. By this time a bright clear moon had risen, the air was fresh and frosty, and the ground firm and in capital marching condition ; the road was filled with pedestrians, all chatting and laughing, with here and there a stray horseman, or a chaise-cart, or a van laden with company. If there had been sunlight and dust, and hundreds more vehicles, it would have looked rather like the road to the Derby ; as it was, it dimly resembled the outskirts of a country fair. At last we began to approach our destination ; the horse and chaise were left in Buzzy Billy’s charge ; and we proceeded

on foot across a marshy piece of ground to a big barn, the battery about to be assaulted. A little inspection showed that this big barn was surrounded by a ditch, that it had heavy earthworks, and that through the embrasures loomed suspiciously the muzzles of two twenty-four-pounder guns. Its occupants had not yet arrived, so we followed the fortunes of the enemy, and pursued our way across the marsh-ground until we came to Ore Creek, in which lay the three little ship-launch gunboats under cover of whose fire the attack was to be made. The scene was a strange one ; to the left, aground like a stranded whale, stood the hull of a brig, now used as the coastguard station, and tenanted by the chief boatman, who, with his family and friends, was calmly standing in the bows and watching the operations. From the shore, gun detachments, all plainly visible in the moonlight, were embarking to board the gunboats under the lee of the coastguard ship ; the commander of the attacking force was silently mustering his men, dealing out to them their ammunition, and giving them their final instructions. A knot of the local population, principally boys and women (the majority were up at the battery), stood by in excitement which bordered very closely on trepidation ; far out to the left one could perceive the track of the little river Swale, and the twinkling lights of the Isle of Sheppey ; while the horizon on the left was cut by the black spars of a collier brig, curiously suggestive of yard-arm execution, and of immediate readiness for the reception of those smugglers who once abounded in these parts, and of whose exploits Thomas Ingoldsby has been the pleasantest narrator.

While the gun detachments were silently stealing towards the gunboats, which, mastless, black, immobile, lay like three porpoises floating side by side in the creek, the attacking force, having been properly rested, were divided into two parties : one to advance against the battery in

front, the other to harass it in flank. All seemed to promise well for the onslaught; when, far away in the direction of the battery, was seen a flash, followed by a tremendous roar, which woke all the echoes of the neighbourhood; the invaded were on the look-out, and had commenced the action. Forthwith the gunboats came to the support of their men, and one after another the little six-pounders blazed away with an intermittent fury which spoke admirably for the manner in which they were served. Under their cover the two portions of the attacking force advanced, firing volleys upon the supports of the defenders, who were promptly called out. So admirably was all this done, that it gave one (I should think) a very fair notion of real warfare; the roar of the guns and the rattle of the small-arms were incessant; through the thick clouds of smoke which rolled over the marshes came hoarse words of command, all ending in that peculiar bellow which ought to convey a great deal to the soldier, as it is utterly unintelligible to the civilian. Happily there were no groans of the wounded, the substitute being the faint shrieks and Lar'-bless-me's of the female portion of the spectators. At first the attacking party carried all before it, and when it arrived at the battery beat off the supports, swarmed into the ditch through the embrasures, and up into the battery itself, to find the enemy retreated and the guns spiked. But, having learned from a prescient bystander that it was not at all unlikely a reverse would take place, I made my way by a détour to the top of a hill, where I passed the retreated Kent Artillery Volunteers comfortably ensconced behind a masked battery, hidden, like Tennyson's "Talking Oak," "to the knees in fern," and awaiting the advent of the invaders, who by this time had left the captured battery and were pursuing their successful career.

These devoted youths advanced until they were very unpleasantly near the covered muzzles of the guns, when

they were received with a salvo which, had the guns been shotted, certainly would have finished the attacking force. They wavered, halted, and then at word of command executed a strategic movement of retreat ; which, in plain English, looked very like running away. Then the invaded ran after them ; then the invaded's supports fired after them ; then the retreating attackers faced about and fired on the advancing repellers ; then the gunboats began to boom again, the battery guns began to blaze away at the gunboats, and the people who were running away ran away a little, turned round and fired, and the people who were running after them ran forward a little and fired ; and so on, with a perpetual roaring and shouting, and running, until the attackers had been beaten off, and were supposed to have retired to their gunboats, and to be in full sail down Ore Creek.

Now did the local population, finding they were neither hanged nor shot nor blown up, as most of them expected, overcome the trepidation under which during the attack they had laboured, and shout great shouts and roars of joy (such as Kentish lungs can alone give vent to), and of applause to both parties engaged. Now did the invaders return from the creek, and prove by their actual presence that they had not sailed away ; and now did they and the repellers, both somewhat grimy and sulphurous-smelling, fraternise and march back in amity to Faversham ; where, in the assembly-rooms, at the expense of the generous major, was set forth a great repast of beef and bread and beer, which was freely and immediately pitched into by all present ; and there was as much interchange of opinions on the night's work, of homely jokes and pleasant banterings, as full mouths and sharp appetites would permit. Now did I return to the coffee-room of the hotel, and finish my night's adventure with a glass of grog, and a chat with such a specimen of the cheery, honest, quaint old English naval

officer as it had never been my good luck to meet before, and as I had hitherto believed was only to be found in the nautical novels of Captain Marryat.

The night-attack at Faversham was a good thing, well conceived, ably planned, well carried out. All drill and no amusement makes Jack (or anybody else) a dull volunteer. To read, we must learn to spell ; but to be always at spelling, even in words of four syllables, would be a dreary task. The formation of fours, the marching in sections and subdivisions, the manual and platoon, the judging-distance drill, etc., are all admirable initiatory exercises ; but to keep interest alive in the men, to throw something like a fascination round the pursuit, you must give them something more than this. This something more is to be found in periodical reviews, in out-camping, in sham-fights, in such a special manœuvre as is here recorded. All that was done at Faversham was on a miniature scale, but the well-arranged programme was kept to the letter, and was carried out with signal success. May it be the prelude to larger operations of like kind !

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SILENT HIGHWAYMEN.

IT does not require one to be much of a philosopher broadly to define that we have our partialities as well as our dislikes, and that we are generally as irrational in one as the other. As the wildest of madmen will talk with perfect sense and fluency until asked what has become of Julius Cæsar, or what soft-soap is made of, when he will suddenly break out into rabid fury and incoherent bellowings, so can I listen with placid smiles to the narrated idiosyncrasies of my friends, meeting each account with placid smile or acquiescent shrug ; but if by ill-chance the subject of the silent highway be touched upon offensively, I break forth and lose my head at once. The Thames is my mania, my love for it the absorbing passion of my life. It is the only one weapon with which I beat my provincial acquaintances and foreign visitors. They come and stay with me, and abuse my place of abode. The provincial says he cannot breathe, the Frenchman says he has the spleen, the German inflates his many-plaited shirt-front, and bellows, “Ach Gott ! was für eine Luft !” and the Italian sighs heavily, and pantomimically searches for the sun. When I show them St. Paul’s, they shrug, muttering of Notre Dame, of the Cologne Dom, of St. Peter’s at Rome, of Il Duomo at Milan ; when I take them through Trafalgar Square they

roar, immediately instituting comparisons between that monstrous national disgrace and the glorious Place de la Concorde of Paris, the Unter den Linden, or the Schloss Platz of Berlin, the St. Stephen's Platz of Vienna, the Piazza di San Pietro at Rome, the Piazza del Granduca at Florence, or the Piazza S. Marco at Venice. The Monument is a standing joke for them, and all the London statues are exquisite themes for ribaldry. They sneer at our theatres, they laugh at our church-architecture, they are impressed with nothing at all, except it be Madame Tussaud's waxwork, until I take them on the Thames. Then I hold them !

Dirty is Father Thames, I grant ; thick, yellow, turbid, occasionally evil-smelling ; but I love him none the less. I know him where he is pure and cleanly, at near-lying Richmond and lock-bound Teddington ; at decorous Hampton, and quaint old-fashioned Sunbury and Chertsey ; by pretty Maidenhead and quaker Staines ; at Pangbourne, Goring, and Streightly, than which three there are not, I opine, any lovelier spots in this lovely country ; at monastic Medmenham and red-faced Henley, far away down to the spot where the banks echo with the time-kept strokes of the racing eight, and the river runs merrily past old Oxford town. I know him throughout ; but I love him best in his own special territory, frowned upon by the great, gaunt, black warehouses, the dreary river-side public-houses, the huge brewery palaces, the shot-towers, the dock-houses, the dim gray Tower of London, the congregationless City churches, the clanging factories, the quiet Temple, the plate-glass works, the export Scotch and Irish merchants, the cheese-factors' premises, the cement-wharves, the sugar consignees' counting-houses, the slimy slippery landing-places, the atmosphere of which is here sticky with molasses, there dusty with flour, and a little way farther off choky with particles of floating wool. Make your embankments,

if you like ; lay down your level road duly granited and palisaded off from the river, and lined with buildings of equal height and of the same monotonous architecture ; but, before you do that, you will have to clear away hundreds of little poky dirty streets of a peculiar speciality nowhere else to be met with—streets which are as thoroughly maritime as Hamilton Moore's Treatise on Navigation, or the bottom of a corvette that has been for three years on the West India station—streets filled with outfitters, sail-makers, ship-chandlers ; bakers of ship-biscuit, makers of ship-chronometers, sextants, and quadrants ; sellers of slop guernseys, and pea-jackets, and sou'-westers ; lenders of money on seamen's advance-notes ; buyers of parrots and cockatoos, thin Trichinopoly cheroots, guava jelly, and Angostura bitters from home-returning Jack.

Look at my Thames, *Historicus* ! and you will have little difficulty in calling before your mind's eye the old days when she was the Silent Highway for all, from the monarch taking water at Westminster, to the prisoner floating in at Traitor's Gate ; when Richard the Second floated in his tapestried barge, and seeing Gower the poet, called him on board, and bade him "make a book after his best," whence arose the *Confessio Amantis* ; when Wolsey, giving up York Place, "took his barge at his privy stairs, and so went by water to Putney ;" when Sir Thomas More, abandoning his chancellorship and his state, gave up his barge and his eight watermen to Sir Thomas Audley, his successor ; when James the Second, flying from his throne, embarked at Whitehall, as old Evelyn records in his Diary : "I saw him take barge—a sad sight." Time after time the oars cleave the waters, the swift wherries hurry towards the water postern of the Tower, the warder stands erect in the bows flouting the thick darkness with his flaming torch, the bearded guards lean negligently on their halberds, and in the midst sit the prisoners ; now, courtly Essex, or

grave-faced Raleigh ; now, Northumberland, or vacillating Dudley, or gentle Lady Jane Grey. The Traitor's Gate opens, and the Constable of the Tower receives them at the stairs ; then the hurried trial, the sentence, and the early morning when the black-visored headsman does his work.

As in a dissolving view, gone is the grim old Traitor's Gate ; and in its place rises a rotunda with a Doric portico, an arcade, and a gallery outside, a Venetian pavilion in the centre of a lake, and grounds planted with trees and allées verts. This is Ranelagh, and the Silent Highway is silent no longer, bearing the chattering company thither on its bosom. “The prince, princess, duke, much nobility, and much mob besides are there.” My Lord Chesterfield is so fond of it that he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither. Dr. Arne composes the music for a concert ; fireworks and a mimic Etna are introduced. A mask taps Sir Roger de Coverley on the shoulder, and begs to drink a bottle of mead with him ; and Dr. Johnson—surly Sam himself—delivers that “the *coup-d'œil* is the finest thing he has ever seen.” The Silent Highway itself is broad, and clear, and wholesome, covered by gay wherries manned by jolly young watermen, all of whom are “first oars” with those fine City ladies who go to Ranelagh and Vauxhall, and all of whom row so neat and scull so steadily (albeit thinking of nothing at all), that the maidens all flock to their boats, and they are never in want of a fare.

But the prompter's bell sounds, and through the Venetian pavilion, already half faded, I see the outline of Hungerford pier, with the ticket-sellers' boxes and the advertisement hoarding ; in place of the trees and the allées verts are the black or chequered funnels of steamers, mincing conversation of beaux and belles is drowned in a roar of “Grinridge, Woollidge—this way for Nine Ellums !” The rapidly-decomposing heads and dresses of the jolly young watermen dwindle down into the small whole-length of a wiry

boy, who, with his eye on the captain's pantomimic finger, shrieks out with preternatural shrillness, "Turn a' starn!"

Yes, this is what it has all come to! The ancient Britons and their coracles, the middle ages and their romance of black boats and halberdiers and prisoners, and torches and Traitor's Gate, the Queen Anne times of hoops and powder, periwigs and cocked hats, rapiers and Ranelagh, all come down to a pea-soup atmosphere, a tidal sewer edged with bone-boiling and tallow-melting premises, and lashed into dull yellow foam by the revolving paddles of the iron steamboats of the Watermen and Citizen Companies, plying every three minutes. The jolly young waterman, who used to row along thinking of nothing at all, is now compelled to think a good deal of the management of his craft, lest she should come in contact with others, or with bridge-piers, and be incontinently sunk. Enormous barges, so helpless and unwieldy that one doubts the possibility of their ever being got home, still cumber Thames's broad bosom; light skiffs dot the surface from Putney to Twickenham; pretty yachts dodge about the Erith and Greenwich reaches; snorting little tugs struggle frantically as they drag big East Indiamen down to the Nore; but still the real Silent Highwaymen nowadays are the passenger steamers.

The river steamboat traffic may be divided into the above and below bridge; for, though some of the Greenwich boats proceed as high as Hungerford, the chief portion of their trade lies between London Bridge and their point of destination, while none of the Chelsea boats are seen east of London Bridge. The above-bridge traffic is conducted by the boats of the Citizen and the Iron Steamboat Company, working in harmony and sharing "times." Their management is, I believe, excellent; but in this paper I shall confine myself to speaking of the Watermen's Company's fleet, which is the largest and the longest estab-

lished on the river. Forty years ago, when the inhabitants of Greenwich had occasion to visit London, they were conveyed to and fro in boats with covered awnings, rowed by a pair of oars, in which, at a charge of sixpence each, they were brought to Tower stairs: those going by land had the privilege of paying eighteenpence for a ride in a slow and very stuffy omnibus, while Woolwich residents had to get to Greenwich as best they could, and thence proceed either by land or water conveyance. As Greenwich extended and the power of steam became known, the watermen of Greenwich formed themselves into a company, and started one or two steamboats; one opposition company did the same, a fraternity at Woolwich followed in the track, and the opposition became tremendous. All these boats started from the same piers at the same time, and the happy captain was he who could cleverly cut into his adversary, knock off her paddle-box, and thus disable her for several days' trip. This state of things could not last long, the Greenwich Company "caved in," the Watermen's and the Woolwich Company entered into amicable arrangement, and thenceforward ran in concord.

These two companies own thirteen boats each; the total number of river steamboats plying on the Thames between Gravesend and Richmond being about sixty. The boats belonging to the Watermen's Company average about ninety tons each; each measures about a hundred and sixteen feet in length, fourteen feet in width, and eight feet in depth. All are built of iron, manufactured in the company's own yard at Woolwich, where about seventy artificers are in constant employment: in addition to which force, the company has about sixty men afloat, and eighteen collectors of tickets or supervisors. Each boat has a crew consisting of a captain, a mate, two men, a call-boy, an engineer, and a stoker. With the exception of the engineers and stokers, all these men must be free watermen (an Act of Parliament

accords to the Watermen's Company the privilege of demanding that all the crews of passenger-carrying vessels must be watermen), and all work up, in regular rotation, from the post of call-boy to that of captain. This alone secures that intimate knowledge of the river, and that incessant vigilance, which is absolutely necessary for the protection of life ; the call-boy is apprenticed to the captain generally, and rises by gradual steps from the bottom of the paddle-box to the top of it, from watching the captain's fingers and explaining his pantomime to the engineer, to twiddling his own fingers and commanding the boat. Everywhere, except in the engine-room, the captain is supreme, and even the engineer is bound implicitly to obey the captain's orders as to the speed and direction of the vessel. Liberal wages are paid ; the captain receives two guineas a week, the engineer the same, the mate has thirty shillings, the men six-and-twenty, the boy seven ; and this is not too much, when it is remembered that about fourteen hours daily is the average attendance required of each.

The expenses attendant on the management of such a company are very large. In addition to the weekly wages just detailed, it may be reckoned that the primary cost of each boat, exclusive of repairs, is five thousand pounds, while the pierage-dues are enormous. At the piers held by the Thames Conservancy the company have to pay sums averaging from one penny to sixpence for every time their boats call, while at other piers they are charged amounts varying from four shillings and sixpence to seven shillings and sixpence for every hundred passengers landing. Thus they disburse between three and four thousand a year in pier-dues ; the rent of the Greenwich landing-stage, which belongs to a company, is alone two thousand pounds a year. With all these disbursements, the company pay a dividend of five per cent. A complaint of drunkenness or incivility against those employed by them is unknown ; and such good feeling exists, that the masters now invite the

men to an annual supper, at which great conviviality reigns, and the highest mutual respect is expressed.

Here is a little bit of the history of my modern silent highwaymen. Come, Monsieur, Herr, or Signor, and show me anything like it in the countries where you dwell.

THE END.

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